

MUSICAL CRITICISMS  
BY  
ARTHUR JOHNSTONE



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# Musical Criticisms

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MUSICAL CRITICISMS  
BY  
ARTHUR JOHNSTONE

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR BY  
HENRY REECE AND OLIVER ELTON

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To Dr. Hans Richter  
in Memory of his Friend and Admirer  
Arthur Johnstone



## FOREWORD.

The Editors desire to express their thanks to the Proprietors of the *Manchester Guardian* for their permission to reprint the articles contained in this volume.

They also wish to acknowledge the assistance they have received in compiling the memoir from the family of the late Mr. Arthur Johnstone and from his friends, and they are more particularly indebted to Professor Sidney Vantyn for the long correspondence he placed at their disposal.

The letters quoted were for the most part written to Mr. Oliver Elton.



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# Memoir



## MEMOIR.

ARTHUR GIFFARD WHITESIDE JOHNSTONE was born December 3rd, 1861, the fourth son of the Rev. Edward Johnstone and Frances Mills. His father was then taking the duty at Colton in Staffordshire, but in the following year accepted the living of Warehorne in Kent; this he resigned in 1866 and went to live at St. Leonards. Mr. Johnstone died in 1870, and the direction of Arthur's education fell entirely upon his mother. Mrs. Johnstone gave her life to good works and to the care of her children, one of whom was an invalid. Arthur looked on her as a saint, and the thought held up his belief in humanity during the somewhat long struggle when his powers and aims were uncertain, and when he had to observe excessive dulness, dreariness, and meanness at close quarters. He was also beholden to her for the gift that was at last to determine his career. She was a good musician, and it was from her that Johnstone inherited his fine taste and received his first instruction in music. Later he studied under Mr. W. Custard, a local organist. The

atmosphere of his home was religious—extreme Anglican approaching to Roman Catholic. Johnstone, though he became by reaction anti-clerical, continued to appreciate the value of religion, chiefly through art and music, as his letters and criticisms show. But his bent was secular as well as artistic; a high Anglican school and a high Anglican college were therefore not a pasture in which he could thrive. His spirit was foreign to theirs. It says much for his strength of mind, that these institutions left him able to admire certain forms of Christian art.

In 1874 he went to Radley and remained there four years, doing neither well nor ill, stifled rather in the ecclesiastical atmosphere of the school, caring little for games, and out of sympathy with the public school spirit. He therefore lived his own life, learnt to protect himself by ingenious tact and reserve, and read irregularly what he liked. Though not specially built for athletics he was by no means lacking in bodily arts and dexterities. When quite young he was a first rate billiard-player, a good skater, and at lawn tennis well above the average. His chief accomplishment was an odd one which never left him. During these early years he made a constant pastime of conjuring, and devoted to it much of his leisure and some of his business hours. He

even gave elaborate entertainments in public, from the age of fourteen. On one occasion when he was only seventeen he was able to apply his skill to a really practical use. He was going by train to give a performance and happened to enter a compartment where there was a gang of card sharpers. They drew him into playing "Nap" with them; soon he began losing and knew that he was being cheated. They were using the ordinary conjuror's cards with plain white backs, of which he had a supply in his pocket. He soon found an opportunity of replacing their pack with one of his own, won back his losses with schoolboy satisfaction, and changed carriages at the first stopping-place, leaving the experts to solve the mystery for themselves. His self-possession in public and private, the mature and slightly initiate air that became less marked as he grew older, were probably due to these performances. They served in his real education. The intellectual side of what is usually common showman's art attracted him. The psychology of the conjuror's victim, amused and angry, straining all his wits on the wrong point; the festal atmosphere, or *Stimmung*, of inattentive youth and good temper necessary for success, the real poverty of intricate mechanical appliance compared with skill

and patter—of these things he would talk in youth with an Edgar-Poe-like elaboration and solemnity, no doubt as well as any man in England. The best of these exhibitions was when Johnstone was professing to explain to a few friends a trick of his own doing. There came first, in long and well-cut sentences, a kind of metaphysic of conjuring; an account of those principles of delusion that were inapplicable in the present instance; exposure of the vulgar and obvious methods, which seemed to the crowd the same as those subtler ones which merely satisfied the conscience of the artist; and lastly, on the verge of the “explanation,” a long parenthesis or a touch of coldness and abstraction, not to be interrupted, which ended, if at all, not in any explanation whatever, but in a last performance of the trick. Johnstone made a point of seeking acquaintance with the chief professors of manual illusion who visited England. He well knew, of course, the methods of signalling to counterfeit clairvoyance; and in one case, that of “Little Louie,” whose show at the Westminster Aquarium was the best public marvel of the sort, he was convinced that the performers only eked out by signalling and other tricks the failures of some genuinely supernormal power of the “telepathic” kind

which they themselves did not fully understand. We say thus much about legerdemain, as it was long our friend's quaint and picturesque substitute for the less original forms of young men's amusement. It gave a good deal of pleasure to other people, and he needed amusement, for his life was not to be easy.

Johnstone left Radley at the end of the summer term 1878, and for the next two years worked under Messrs. Wren and Gurney for the Indian Civil Service, the limit of entrance then being nineteen years. It must be admitted that he made no serious attempt to succeed, and that here, as at Oxford later, the prospect of an examination proved to be the reverse of an incentive to work. Perhaps it was fortunate for him that he failed, for though he would have found a great interest in the natives (and extended his *répertoire* of tricks) he would have been repelled by the average Anglo-Indian; besides, his abilities did not lie in the direction of legal and political administration. In October, 1880, Johnstone came up to Keble College, Oxford, and he quickly had a small circle round him. Among his friends were R. A. Farrar, son of the well-known Dean, and G. H. Fowler, the biologist, of his own College; Winter, of St. John's, the



best musician among undergraduates; his biographers; and, later, Prof. York Powell, who instantly detected his ability and force of nature. Amongst the dons of Keble, Johnstone cared for two. One was the Warden, the Rev. E. S. Talbot, now Bishop of Southwark, who behaved with tact, and encouraged as far as he might a mind of no pattern type, which would not bring the College any regulation honours; the other was the Rev. J. R. Illingworth, the best writer of the school, and since known as a philosophical preacher. Ascetic, but thoroughly humane, Mr. Illingworth attracted Johnstone by his honesty and fineness of temper. But these clergymen, after all, dwelt in their own world, not in his. Until he met York Powell, Johnstone had found no older man from whom he could learn without cautions and reservations, and who struck him as a master-mind and a perfectly free spirit. The two men signally valued each other's conversation; they had many delicate qualities in common—the kind of delicacy only found in Bohemians of experience who have kept their perceptions at the finest edge. Powell materially helped Johnstone more than once by letting persons of consequence know what he thought of his younger friend. Even in Powell's record there was



hardly any friendship more completely unruffled.

In youth, as an undergraduate, Johnstone was sallow, but healthy, rather lean and light, with a large and well-moulded musician's head, like Beethoven's or, still more, Rubinstein's, in the outline of the overhanging brow. It is easy to recall that earnest face, that delightful smile, always characteristic of him, and, above all, the fascination of his playing on the piano. His voice was clear and carried well, with a sharp metallic ring when he was indignant, but was usually pitched low, as if unwilling to be overheard. His manner was formed and his talk was from the first what it remained: forcible, emphatic, and undoubtedly over-superlative at times, cut into quaintly elaborate but perfectly built sentences, which came so naturally to him that we have heard him discharge one of them the moment after opening his eyes in the morning. They can best be illustrated by his more familiar style in his writings and letters; the latter, indeed, give a fairly exact reflex of his talk. A *flâneur* of the best kind, he observed closely and curiously; in spite of long spells of apparent idleness, the alert quality of his mind never showed the faintest trace of slackness. He described

vividly and accurately; and he had a remarkable gift for explaining any subject or point of view unfamiliar to his listeners, careful that the slightest detail should not escape them. And, in turn, he would quickly catch up and develop the ideas of his friends however vaguely suggested or insufficiently thought out. Johnstone professed Radical principles and was a member of the Russell Club, where the advanced Liberals met for papers and debates; but his Radicalism was social rather than political, and after the foreign experiences of his later years his opinions tended in the direction of strong government and Imperialism. At this time it amused him to be rather eccentric in dress, though he afterward became trim and fairly modish. In 1882 the intellectual undergraduate was capable of wearing a wide-brimmed, light-brown, hard hat, descending over the ears and eyes and long hair penthouse fashion. He had one of these "built for me, ground plan and projection" on a special scale. He also had a tie which could be folded into twenty-five different aspects or patterns, some of them striking; it was a mosaic of squares, and the harvest of a long search; twenty-five neckties in one. His collars were ultra-Byronic. Otherwise he was not markedly strange in attire; though

the real incongruity was between these freaks of dress, and the keen intent grey gleam of his eyes, and the look of held-in vehemence and sensibility.

To what did this sensibility tend, what did it crave for? Not chiefly for definite learning, or book-knowledge, or for abstract philosophical truth. Johnstone's nature and gifts did not set towards scholarship (except afterwards to musical scholarship) or to pure speculation. He wanted, no doubt, to write, but he never cared to practise style as a mere handicraft; "let us have," he would say, "something with blood in it." He did not ask for religious solutions or consolations. Since nearly all he printed was on musical subjects, only his letters and our memories can give the impression of what he wanted. It was a sufficiently rare ambition among the Oxford young men of our time, though often enough professed. He wanted art and beauty. This desire, of course, in others often was a cant; there were scholars and verse-makers—more or less of the "æsthetic" type—sentimental and hard at bottom like most such persons, who cultivated beauty, and have usually come to nothing except prosperity. Johnstone was of another race to these; they never heard of him; he did not care for the main chance; he was in

profound earnest. Few young men looked at life with so definite an aspiration to get the grace, enjoyment, and beauty out of it, and so definite a conviction that not much of these things is attainable. To such spirits, pre-appointed to suffer and wait, society seems at first an irrational welter, out of which, as by a miracle, emerge enchanting islets of grace, and wit, and cheer. The desire to find beauty in things or persons, and the desire to find soul and humanity, are the unalloyed, intense, and usually disappointed passions of elect youth claiming its rights. It is the second of them that saves a young man from the conceit and exclusive folly that may beset the first. Johnstone's tastes, his reading, loves and friendships were guided by these two passions, and by a third which took off from the strain of them, and was equally imperious—the wish to study the world and to be entertained reasonably. Classes did not exist for him, except that he often felt he was more likely to be able to foregather with and help men and women who were at a discount in the world. With such warring elements and a spirit so hard to satisfy, it was no wonder that his earlier years seemed planless, and in part were so. The instinct for travel and odd experience lasted long. No one but his near friends had much knowledge of this complex



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but essentially single nature. To them there seemed to be more than a seed of nobility and fair example in such a youth, so externally disappointing to parents, and guardians, and shepherds of colleges. Out of it was gradually wrought a character full of fire and aspiration, fundamentally austere and uncompromising in loyalty and in artistic conscience, but masked under a certain reticence. But this is to forestall by several years.

Johnstone had entered Oxford at a time of great intellectual ferment. Looking back we can now see that it was during the years about 1880 that the revolutionary flood ran highest. The authority of Darwin and Huxley was unquestioned by many of the younger generation and all-embracing. The vague Christianity and sentimental optimism of Tennyson was held in little esteem beside the wider tolerance, the subtle analysis, the ceaseless curiosity of Browning. Above all "the Bard," as Swinburne was admiringly called, was the poet of the young men. Another very important factor in the mental development of our generation—and for Johnstone, perhaps, the strongest of all—was supplied by the French literature of the century, from the Romantic School onwards. It is no wonder, therefore, that the reaction from the High Church influences and



surroundings of his youth was severe and complete, and that his highly æsthetic nature demanded the fullest artistic and intellectual freedom. The so-called "æsthetic movement," as we have before implied, left him untouched. He would have nothing to do with the attempt to symbolize and revive a civilization that had utterly passed away, nor with the deliberate neglect of the modern world, and its most intense and living art—Music. Johnstone had not much mediæval sense, and was sparing in his appreciation of Rossetti, to whom he became unjust. What he liked best was "Jenny," though he was rightly critical on the unsound streaks in its rhetoric. It was first brought home to him, as to others of his group, by the skilful and dramatic reading, in a singular clanging voice, of his chief Keble friend, C. W. Pettit: a young man of high and melancholy character who was found drowned, probably by accident, in the Upper River, near Oxford, in the spring of 1882. A memorial stone with Pettit's initials marks the place, in an unfrequented reach of the stream, and the inscription, if not effaced, is now a mystery except to some few who remember him.

"Jenny" also struck upon what may be mentioned now as the deepest chord in Johnstone's sympathies; it is heard sounding



in the letters, quoted below, that review the stories of Ruth, Fantine, and Tess of the D'Urbervilles. His attitude in this matter was free from conventional ethics, and was, therefore, essentially Christian; and the relations of society to technically errant women, who have lapsed even once by accident, pre-occupied him bitterly, and that in no theoretical or sequestered way. In his own gipsy experience, he witnessed at least one instance where the issue only just escaped disaster. He was haunted by the story, as De Quincey was by that of his lost companion in Oxford Street. The girl whom Johnstone, though generally hard up, managed to befriend in his secret, chivalrous and effectual fashion, finally married some one decent and respectable. Concealing the place and circumstance, he afterwards cast the incident of the "Fantine of Shotover" (we also conceal, of course, the name of the village) into a kind of prose sketch or *poème*, which he finished when he was about twenty-six, re-wrote twice, and thought of printing. It is unfortunately not now to be traced. Its musical, exalted prose, if inexperienced in form, gave genuine promise in that kind of composition; but he never to our knowledge, pursued the vein, and the prose in which he became expert was, apart from his letters, purely

critical and expository. Still, enough has been said to show the force and unusual bent of Johnstone's human sympathies. It is clear that a young man's truth of instinct and strength of head are never more hardly taxed than when he is confronted with a concrete story of this kind. He may become foolish in opposite ways, especially if he is also an artist and has strength of temperament. He may be personally entangled through his sympathies, and make ill worse. He may be superior, and spoil everything by clumsy missionary benevolence, hard of hand. It is something if he can get behind the ordinary, blind, damnatory formulæ of society. This however, is not so difficult to a free mind. What is harder is to do it, and yet to see the facts without mere theorising, without the cumber of rhetorical and literary sentiment that obscures them. A Scotch-descended brain is useful at this point. In our memory Johnstone rose to the occasion thus presented, and acted and judged with balance. But we are more concerned now with the road by which he arrived at his force of sympathy. *Æstheticism* of the rootless academic kind had, it is evident, no hold upon him; he was too angry to be precious; but his motive power at bottom was that of the artist, as it was surely not that of the radical theorist

or philanthropic organiser; although it was, if we use accurate language, by no means less human than theirs. What was at work was his sense of beauty; of physical beauty, first of all, or of grace, in the victimised person, as the sign and vesture of an originally sound and simple, or gay and innocently festal nature; beauty inbred, and then marred by some rough contact, and then marred more by social punishment, and seldom retrieved, even in part—as in the particular instance it chanced to be retrieved—by any fortunate and final escape. All this revolts the deepest of human feelings, which distinguishes us from most of the beasts, namely the æsthetic feeling, which at this point happens to coincide closely with the religious. A certain depth and rarity were thus super-added to the plain good feeling and kindliness of the man; and we can draw these facts from the jealous hiding-place of the past without undue violence to the shyness in which he wrapped them, as they show his personal and special path of approach to the human tragedy, and may even come to the notice of, and serve for the encouragement of similar minds at a corresponding stage of discontent. We may now go back to his early youth, when he was halfway through Oxford, and when some of these ideas were germinating into necessarily

crude expression, which none the less has its interest. In a letter of 1881, he writes:—

“How can we escape from Swinburne? Does not modern society drive one to his school, at least the sort of society that I am *supposed* to have been brought up in, whose moral atmosphere is a sort of perpetual afternoon tea, where all the men are pale young curates and the women district visitors, their excitements vulgar ritualistic tea-pot tempests, the doctrinal significance of birettas, purificators . . . . Their minds ever on the alert to quash the smallest expression of any delight in natural beauty—‘beauty is only skin-deep,’ the damndest lie that was ever formulated (compare Browning’s Paracelsus). I wish with Gautier that I had been born in the days of the Roman Empire, when asceticism was almost unknown and what there was of it entirely specialised, before ever such an astounding classification as the World, the Flesh, and the Devil had been made, or every natural beauty writhed, like the divine feminine torso, in the accused grip of fashion.” These are the outpourings of a very young man only twenty. It may fairly be said that Johnstone was always far more of an ascetic, personally, than he ever admitted, and the articles on Bach and Sir Edward Elgar abundantly prove the religious habit of mind

induced by the training and associations of his early years. A year later his views have become better balanced, as shown by the following extract from a letter on the same subject.

"I read most of the *Apologia* a month or two back. As you say, Newman stands quite alone in his sincerity and spiritual power, the only orthodox thinker who is not an instance of self-deception resulting from reiterated untruth. All the purest and most beautiful aspects of the old faith seem to group round him. But the lights are almost out on the stage where he poses so magnificently, a rough crowd is spoiling all the scenic illusion, and garish sunbeams are coming in through the roof.

"I was moved to tears the day before yesterday by the appearance in this place [Tunbridge Wells] of a pretty face."

"There she was, a radiant and triumphant vindication of human nature among the myriad libels on the human form.

"I love the wonderful human body. How utterly the most beautiful of imaginable things in its strange dualism ; perfect form expressed with infinite subtlety in two mutually supplemental phases. The one—tall, lithe-limbed, and athletic, with its shifting net-work of muscles beneath the clear brown skin, boldly



chiselled features and short crisp hair—emblem of strength and swiftness and godlike protection, buoyant and fearless ; the other—a harmony of exquisite curves, white and sensitive, and crowned with rippling hair, fulfilled of tender life and wondrous grace—living type of fruitfulness. To say that either deviated from the abstract perfection of form is merely to say the very idea of sex is such a deviation ; and is there not a certain divine suggestiveness in this very fact ? Their union is perfect Beauty—veils of the great human Sacrament. And all this is faded clean out of modern life. The belief in the body is dead. I believe some of us live and die never knowing the likeness of the human form, just as some of us do without ever seeing the sunrise.

“The ‘pale Galilean’ has banished Beauty ; and only here and there, disguised almost beyond recognition, has it ventured with infinite apology to return . . . . Yet let us not be all unthankful to the pale Galilean and his lessons of suffering ; there are too many of us who see in their own instincts the very impress of impossibility to be satisfied, who have to reflect with some bitterness, not *‘il faut mourir,’* but *‘il faut vivre’* and gather up our scraps and skulk along, hoping, perhaps, some day for a lowly

place in some court in the House of Life, if it be only that of a scullion. And then at what a frightful cost have those lessons become part of the world's inheritance! Surely it cannot have been for nothing."

Obviously, in all this outburst, if its literary and intellectual origins are not hard to trace, there was no pose whatever; it was a mood that Johnstone honestly and passionately lived through, or rather it remained as a background to his nature. He was far from happy at this period. He had many friends and varied interests, but he felt that life was being wasted; in fact he had not "found himself," nor was he to do so until his visit to Germany. No doubt Keble was not the college for one of his temperament, and the English system of teaching the classics made them, for him, dead languages indeed; but had their oral use been encouraged (the practice of the late Professor Blackie) it is possible that he might have taken a real interest in them. With one of his friends he would speak constantly in Latin.

During the next few years Johnstone was mainly engaged in scholastic work, and the necessity of earning his own living prevented him from taking his degree. In a letter of September 1885, he regrets that he "had to

live much in continuous utter rebellion against outward circumstances. In the morning is much strife and crying; in the evening, comfort of the pot. The Day of Rest brings loneliness in crowds—'stalled oxen and hatred.' *Ca finira.*"

In the spring of 1887 he inherited a small legacy, which set him free, for a time, from the drudgery of teaching, and enabled him to carry out his long-deferred wish for a course of serious musical study at a foreign conservatorium. At this period he knew absolutely no German, and had only a fair knowledge of French, and was quite unconscious of possessing the natural gift for modern languages, which he was afterwards to turn to good account at the Edinburgh Academy and elsewhere. In August he went to Kreuznach to acquire the elements of German before proceeding to the Cologne Conservatorium, where he had determined to study. The family where he stayed could speak no English and but little French, so he was forced from the outset to express himself in a strange tongue and make shift to understand it. Early in October he entered the Conservatorium as a student, and engaged himself to take the year's course. His chief friend was M. Sidney Vantyn, now Professor of the Piano at the Liège Conservatoire, and then in



his last year of study. They met in the class of Professor Eibenschütz, one of the most severe masters there, who made no allowance for Johnstone's previous amateur training, and was rather harsh and discouraging. He knew no English and Johnstone's German was still elementary, so Vantyn, who knew English thoroughly, acted as interpreter between them. In his recollections of those days M. Vantyn writes:—

“It was certainly evident that he had never had a musical training before his arrival in Cologne. Johnstone's fingers were stiff and he had to begin almost at the very beginning. And this he had the courage to do. At that time I was one of the advanced pupils, I offered to help, and for some months we practised together every day, more especially with a view to developing the fingers. In April, 1888, he showed me a sketch of a *Valse de Concert*. This composition was what one would have expected from Johnstone—bright, original, thorough. At my request he completed the *Valse* which I played shortly afterwards at a concert, where it met with a decided success. A little later it was sold to a music publisher at Liège. He soon left Herr Eibenschütz for Dr. Klauwell, with whom he studied the piano and harmony.” Among the other professors at the Conservatorium were

Humperdinck, afterwards famous as the composer of *Hansel und Gretel*, and Gustav Jensen, the brother of the better-known song writer.

At length, Johnstone was living in a world which brought out his best qualities and stimulated his keenest interests. But he now realised that he had come ten years too late for the attainment of any eminence, either as executant or composer, and contented himself with considerably extending his general knowledge of music. Nor did he ever confine his attention to music alone; but he endeavoured to see as much as possible of German methods of work, especially as regards the teaching of languages. In reading the Cologne verdict on Johnstone's early training it must be remembered that in his youth the piano was not well taught in England, where the principles and importance of a good technique were alike unknown. Of course, the principal and all his masters liked him personally, but naturally their chief interest lay with young pupils who promised to make a name in the musical world. The year's course at the Conservatorium ended in July, and about this time he writes:—

“As regards intentions, I am quite resolved now (and quite contented) to become a modern language teacher for life. During

this year I have obtained some insight into the musical profession, with the conclusion that for all but the very few of quite the first rank it is a wretched life. So I am after all going to take my degree, and shall reside next term as a member of Balliol. . . . I could get a living by music now, but that would be to sink into a drudgery yet worse than anything I have yet had to do. I *will* not teach beginners. Besides, I can make a much better living in another profession."

Johnstone returned to England at the end of August, 1888, in wonderful spirits and in better health than he had ever before enjoyed, bursting with ideas and enthusiasm for everything German. It was Gulliver's homecoming after the voyage to the Houyhnhnms, and his friends had to listen to criticism of a similar kind. There is no doubt that this year brought real maturity to Johnstone. He gained a confidence in himself and a grip on life, which even when the prospect seemed most hopeless prevented him from ever again falling into his old moods of despondency. In October he returned to Oxford. Some years back he had taken his name off the books of Keble and migrated to New Inn Hall. The Hall had lately been absorbed by Balliol, and so in the end Johnstone

became a member of the College which should have sheltered him from the beginning. In Balliol he was tolerably well at home, though now senior to the men around him. He forgathered with Farmer, who had just left Harrow for Balliol and with the Master's support arranged a concert in the Hall every Sunday evening. Once he gave a conjuring show, by Farmer's request. Jowett shrilled in cherubic mirth, sent for Johnstone, listened to his conversation, which flowed more easily than that of most of Jowett's undergraduate visitors and was of another stamp; and continued to treat him with politeness. Johnstone, whose classics had somewhat rusted during his stay in Germany, read with Mr. St. George Stock, the philosophical writer, then and since a well-known private teacher in Oxford. In December he passed the necessary schools and took his degree; his last experience of the old, disquieting city was pleasant, if brief—a period of *recueillement* before embarking upon the new career which he had chosen.

In the March following, 1889, he received an offer to go as tutor to the young son of Prince Abamélek in Podolia, a province of Southern Russia. The following account of his journey is interesting:—

“I left Berlin on Thursday morning at

8.30 ; the stage through Galicia, Oswiecim, Cracow, Lemberg, Podwoloczyska was a bad twenty-four hours. Just at the frontier the snow was immensely deep, standing in a wall on each side of the train. It was like being let into Russia through the works of a great snow fortification. The worst mistake I made was in bringing no victuals with me. I noticed at the frontier examination that my portmanteau was the only one not half full of food. The restaurants at the large junctions are excellent, being all under the management of Tartars, a race possessing the genius of cookery, but if you have to wait as I did, more than twenty-four hours at an out-of-the-way country station, you may find nothing obtainable but tea. Travelling in Russia is in any case tiring; the distances are interminable, and every journey has to be regarded as a sort of pilgrimage. On coming from Osipoffka here, we had to leave about ten in the evening to meet the desired train.

"The start was rather amusing, for we were a considerable caravan with children, servants, horses and dogs. All night we drove across the Steppe, accompanied by several mounted men with torches, which they lighted when the way was bad.

"I had an outside place and was somewhat dazed and curried by the wind and dust by



the time we got to the station. Railway travelling is interesting if you have got the courage not to go first class. The carriages are on the American plan, with an opening down the middle. Instead of dapper bagmen you find long-coated and long-haired Jews, besides soldiers and students in curious costumes, while whole families, travelling together, produce the effect of an emigrant convoy. Everyone undresses with complete *sang-froid*.

"The family always come for the summer to this estate. It lies in a well-wooded district of Podolia, some hundred miles further north than the region to which I first went. The house is very large, and the garden magnificent. It is skirted by a river and there are primitive boats and an excellent bathing place. They have also a steam-launch of English manufacture, which is shortly to be got afloat.

"The neighbourhood is a paradise of Gipsies. The river throws out arms and endless windings, and the ground between is much broken and covered with undergrowth. Here the Gipsies encamp. One sees them in the evening bathing with their horses, and thus I had an opportunity of observing a thing, the peculiar and suggestive appropriateness of which is remarked on by Darwin in

his 'Voyage of the Beagle,' namely, a naked man on a naked horse. This is the true centaur; they become one thing. I am now convinced that the Gipsies are the most physically beautiful of all races. In England they are abject beggars, but here rather more well-to-do than the average of the population; for they are not like the peasants, more than half-starved by ecclesiastical regulation, and obviously, in a country in such a stage as Russia is at present, they have a better time. There are plenty of immense regions where they can trap and fish quite unmolested, and the climate favours their mode of life—doubly, I should imagine, the winter giving a short account of defective constitutions. I suppose they are thieves, but to the casual observer they are entirely admirable. Troops of splendid little brown children go about in the evening singing or shrieking with shrill laughter. Their music, by the way, is valued in Russia. There are several troops who get large sums for attending various festivities.

"It has gradually been borne in upon me that the climate of this region is almost ideal. The sky is deep blue and far off, yet the heat is, never really oppressive, on account of a constant breeze which brings balsam from the woods. For the landscape a finer contrast could scarcely be found to the Southern

Steppe, which is like the burnt and scraped bottom of a pot. It has a character of its own, of course. From the fact of being usually able to see to the level horizon in all directions, it reminds one of the sea, while in summer the heated and quivering air which rises from the ground produces marvellous atmospheric effects; but there is always a wind, skin-drying and far from healthy. Here, on the other hand, we are well watered and surrounded by deep and lordly forest, and the aspect of the whole country is *riant*.

"I have not yet seen much of the *kirchliches Wesen*. The priest at Osipoffka, I gathered, is a man who has to get in a mass as often as he is sober enough. The Abaméleks do not receive him, and never go to Church while there. In any case, I do not think the Princess is particularly *dévoté*. She is of Polish descent, and her family having given up Western Catholicism, have never become, I suppose, enthusiastic as Russian orthodox.

"Of the children the boy is much the most interesting. The eldest girl, though not without promise of beauty, is at present in a somewhat gaping and lumbering stage. The younger one is much smaller, though only a little younger than her sister, also of better intelligence, if worse temper. She laughs with a curious *abandon* and is full of *câlineries*,



and is two totally different persons when pleased and bored.

“Master Paul has not the faintest resemblance that I can trace to either of them. He is an exceptionally round-limbed and well-made child, with low forehead and hair like dead-black fur showing a dead-white skin between, tending to stand up though perfectly soft, and always with a backward sweep, as though he had lately stood facing a high wind; beady brown eyes, clear brown colour, delicate little nose and chin and a mouth like a cherry, make up a face which is no false promise of his vivacity of temperament. It changes in the hundredth part of a second from bubbling laughter to a sort of Last Judgment seriousness.

“He wags his little *tête de Polichinelle* over his victuals, and converses with them in several languages. Sometimes his mother interrupts him and asks if he knows what he is saying, when he swears that he hasn't spoken for a quarter of an hour. *Pauvre petit bijou* she calls him.”

In the autumn of 1889 his engagement as tutor ended, and he spent the winter in Odessa to study the language. He put himself, as usual, under conditions where it was impossible to speak any other language; entered a Russian family; prepared his

questions in Russian when he shopped; and addressed in Russian the official who delayed his necessary papers until he had silently put down a bribe of two roubles, and who then shook him warmly by the hand. He was full of tales; he told of the English journalist, so aggressively and deliberately English that he would not uncover before the Tsar's portrait in a hairdresser's shop; of the Prince Abamélek, who was always talking of taking him out shooting, but never did so; of the Princess, who feared that her little Paul was "*trop jeune encore pour profiter de son esprit éminentement cultivé*"; of the social tyranny of Russian orthodoxy, which drove free-thinking persons of quality in the country to church and sacrament at all the Christian festivals; and, finally, of his shortness of funds which forced him to find his way home in humble style.

As an English liberal, Johnstone was naturally a welcome guest in the society of the Reform party; and on his return to England he was to meet Stepniak at the house of their common friend, York Powell, and to enroll himself among the Friends of Russian Freedom. But he was more in sympathy with the members of the Reform movement than with their objects. While in Russia, such connections secured him a mild surveillance



AGED 26.



on the part of the officials, and he had a little difficulty in obtaining the necessary passport to leave the country ; but these vexations did not prevent him from holding that a paternal government was required in Russia, and that his countrymen as a whole were to blame for their harsh judgment of a civilisation merely because it ran counter to their own political ideals. The late Bishop Creighton arrived at precisely the same conclusion after his visit to Russia to attend the Coronation in 1896.

On his way home he spent some months in Buda-Pesth, Vienna, and the Tyrol, and made his first visit to Bayreuth and the Passion Play at Oberammergau.

Shortly after his return to England Johnstone accepted a mastership in Modern Languages at the Edinburgh Academy, where his elder brother had been a classical master for some years. He came into residence in September, 1890, and Edinburgh was his home until he left that city for Manchester, in January, 1896. On the whole he was happy there; for though teaching foreign languages to boys is rather a thankless task, he was cheered from time to time by the successes of his pupils in examinations elsewhere, mainly those for entrance to Woolwich and Sandhurst. He could even confess, after a long summer

holiday on the Continent, that "he was again thoroughly penetrated with the atmosphere of gray old long-faced Sawbath-keeping Edinburgh." After all, Johnstone, though he considered himself an Englishman, was, as may be gathered from his name, Scotch on his father's side ; his mother, too, had a strain of Scotch blood. So perhaps that quiet self-contained manner and all that it implied came to him from north of the Tweed.

About this time, he was penetrated with the excellent purpose of training his bodily nerve. He knew that he could never be noticeably muscular, or anything more than wiry, with his light frame and high tension. But he would say, "we ought to be able to see a man fall from a high scaffolding on to the pavement, just before our feet, battered, and to do whatever is necessary without turning a hair." Accordingly, though himself most sensitive to pain and to the sight of it, he fraternised with the young doctors and surgeons whom he met, accompanied them to operations, watched the worst things, and even gave his help, which was more than once invited owing to his deftness and neatness of handling. In this way he got over any shrinking of the nerves. In Edinburgh he also managed to find some amusement. He was a foreigner in his

adaptiveness to restaurant life, and found a quiet French café to his taste, where he took his visitors. The odd stratification of Edinburgh society into the various aristocracies of the country, University, professions and commerce, and its broad Scotch democratic feeling, entertained him. He was in one emergency summoned as French interpreter in the police court, and was pleased at having given satisfaction to himself and the magistrate, as the case was a somewhat delicate one and demanded nicety of expression. York Powell, writing to a friend in June, 1893, spoke of Johnstone as "a fine fellow, very interesting; a musician doomed for the sins of others (for he is not a great sinner) to be a dominie in 'Edinboro', where he is consoled by an old Frenchman who can talk and understand; and they have, with one or two more, a little French club. Each pays sixpence a night for expenses, and you have simple refreshments and sound conversation."

Above all, his musical opportunities were good and varied, and he took the fullest advantage of them. Music in Edinburgh had, for many years, maintained a high standard. The orchestral concerts were second only to those conducted by



Hallé and Richter; the latter brought his own band occasionally, and every solo player of eminence came there from time to time. He found many congenial friends, and was a frequent guest at the houses of Mrs. Sellar, the widow of the Professor of Humanity at Edinburgh, and Dr. Berry Hart, the famous surgeon, where musical amateurs met constantly; and he was a member of the "Rhyme and Reason Club," where literary and artistic questions were discussed.

His most note-worthy contribution to the Club was a paper on the "Relation of Music to the Words in Songs," which he afterwards read at the Manchester College of Music, and which well merits a summary here (and some extracts). It shows how his mind was steadily working in the direction of musical criticism. Its origin was a statement made in a paper on Tennyson's songs, that poetry, if it be true poetry, is self-sufficient, and the addition of music to it, however fine the music may be in itself, is an intrusion and a disturbance for the true lover of poetry.

The first part of his paper is concerned with an examination into the nature of music and its place among the arts. He goes on to deplore the divorce between music and the songs of modern English poets, none of which are capable of being sung, and traces



this divergence back to the days when Puritanism banished music from church and village green. Burns, he adds, wrote genuine songs ; but he is the only song-writer since the days of Elizabeth, and worthy of being ranked with Heine. He concludes by claiming for music " that it is not an inferior art, a mere hand-maid to poetry, but a direct revelation of the principle of beauty and on a footing of honourable equality with poetry. The songs of all the really great lyrical poets are obviously and radiantly singable, and meant to be sung, and in their authors' lifetime they were sung. So far then from the finest lyrical poetry being impaired by association with music, it is only the maimed poetry of decadence that does not admit of such association, one unfailing mark of a lyric of the highest order being that it rises to the true singing quality." In the following passage Johnstone sets forth the ideal at which the composer of songs should aim :—

" The great German song composers, such as Schubert, Schumann, Franz and Brahms, working in profound sympathy with the ' Volkslied,' have arrived at a conception of the song infinitely richer, more refined, and more genial than is to be found elsewhere. With Franz and Schumann we find that, in the best cases, the music positively furnishes

a sort of literary criticism on the text, with such exquisite exactness does the composer appreciate the text and supply the appropriate musical counterpart.

“We often hear of the music being *wedded* to the words of a song, and it is very curious to find so wonderfully neat and perfect a metaphor being used by people who are far from suspecting its perfection. This is in fact, precisely what takes place when a good song is composed—the music is *wedded* to the verse, though the expression is often used by those who think that the music has nothing to do but to express again, more forcibly perhaps, whatever feeling is expressed by the verse, who think, in other words, that the music is enslaved, not wedded, to the poetry.

“But music is not restricted to the expression of the feeling of certain verses or of any other feeling or feelings. The poetry and the music have each their independent character and their measure of independent beauty, and this independent beauty and character is in no sense destroyed by the union. The music has far more to do than merely express again or emphasise whatever feeling is expressed by the verse. It may accompany the verse, adorn the verse, brighten the verse, show up the character of the verse in a new light, and, in turn, be much improved by

the association; but on the other hand, if destitute of independent beauty, the music can never become beautiful by being *wedded* to something.

“It will now have become clear, what according to the view of music that I have endeavoured to explain, is the task of a song composer. He has far more to do than to express again in tones the feeling of the song. He has to furnish a composition that, in the first place, has life; and, in the domain of art, to have life is to have beauty.

“Secondly, it must have no incompatibility of temperament with the text, but must be such as can once for all be wedded to the text with happy results.

“It is needless to say that a composer who takes this view, or has a subconscious appreciation of the facts on which this view is based, will not, if he cares for his text, be satisfied with the first outworn rubbish that comes to hand, by way of musical setting. He will regret whatever is totally wanting in naturalness and freshness.

“He will not, like the composer of drawing-room ballads, capture some wretched cadence, threadbare with much use, and trick it out, dragging up the melody into long high notes, crowing and shouting as though he had discovered America, whereas all he has really

discovered is an old shoe lying by the roadside that once, perhaps, belonged to a prince, but after being stolen by the valet was given to a beggar, and so through a succession of beggars, the last of whom left it by the side of the high road."

Johnstone's interest in music was becoming more and more intense. In the intervals of his school work he composed a Gavotte which had a quaint origin. He was one day in a music publisher's shop in Edinburgh, when he saw a gavotte on the counter which had won a prize of £5 or £10 offered by the firm for the best composition in gavotte form submitted to them. "And is this your prize gavotte?" said Johnstone, "Well, if I couldn't compose a better gavotte than that in the time it takes to write it down I should think *even* worse of myself than I do." "Why then," said the representative of the firm, "go home and compose your gavotte, we will publish it if we take it and give you the same money as this prize-winner got." Johnstone went home and composed it, and the firm carried out their promise.

His few compositions were nearly always actually produced and completed under some sudden pressure from outside. Left to himself, his critical impulse was always stronger than his productive ; he became dissatisfied

and dropped the thing he was working at. His friend, the well-known singer, Fritz Hedmond, having obtained from him a promise to arrange a certain song, let matters drop until the concert date was fixed and the programmes printed with the song announced "arranged by Mr. Arthur Johnstone." He then forwarded the programme to Johnstone with the observation that, of course, the thing had to be done. And it was done, in twenty-four hours, and was a beautiful and original bit of harmonization. He also set several songs, which, like the gavotte, met with the approval of Prof. F. Niecks, and were the main subjects of a fairly regular correspondence with Vantyn. In one of these letters he gives an appreciation of the pianoforte piece he most admired.

"About Schumann's *Etudes Symphoniques* I can only say this: For a long time past I have privately held the opinion that the work is on the whole, the finest composition for pianoforte solo in existence. This will no doubt seem to you exaggerated, but such is my feeling about it. The extraordinary wealth of imaginative beauty in those variations I believe to be quite without parallel. Just think of that last variation before the finale. There is nothing else in music which bears even the faintest resemblance to it."



Every summer he spent several weeks on the continent, and it was on one of these visits that he first made the acquaintance of Nietzsche's philosophy, which was then hardly known in England though beginning to be talked of in Scotland under the influence of Dr. Tille of Glasgow.

In December, 1903, he writes to Miss Sellar :—

“ The author of *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* is Friedrich Nietzsche. I suppose you will no more agree with the point of view than with Sudermann's ; for, in fact, the point of view of the two writers is practically identical, but I do not think you can fail to recognise the extraordinary originality and force, and, above all, the magnificent honesty of Nietzsche.

“ Have you not noticed that most serious-minded and well-intentioned people in our day go about with a revised table of the virtues, saying ‘ truth ’ when they mean a certain group of optimistic delusions ; saying ‘ courage ’ for readiness in accepting and energy in reiterating such delusions, and persistency in closing the eyes to all those facts of life which do not harmonise with them.

“ So far as my experience goes, the only people in our day who say and admit the

truth to the best of their lights are the disciples of Schopenhauer—Ibsen, Tolstoi, Zola, Sudermann, Nietzsche.

“No doubt you will regard this statement with my ‘personal equation’ looming large. I mean you will consider there is no more in it than that these are the teachers with whom I happen to agree. But I shall be surprised if you do not admit Nietzsche’s honesty and the extraordinarily searching and luminous character of his thought.”

If Johnstone had been put through the mangle of the Honour School called “Greats,” it might have left him superciliously deaf to Nietzsche. As it was, being without philosophic training, but deeply sensitive to any new, articulate and daring voice, as well as perfectly at home in German, he found in Nietzsche a liberating and refreshing power. And then his personal experiences disposed him to accept the main thesis of Nietzsche’s philosophy that mankind, owing to the teachings of Christianity, had sacrificed the future of the race to over-much care for the weaker brethren. At the same time he kept his head, and signed no vow of submission to Nietzsche. The review of Tille’s translation, well bears partial reprinting in this volume for its keen intelligence and also as a quite early sketch of the Nietzschean system in the

English press. It was one of the first articles written by Johnstone for the *Manchester Guardian*, and makes us regret, unwisely no doubt, that his mind was to be absorbed more and more in music.

Yet, in spite of that absorption, he was as deeply interested as ever in literature and the drama, when dealing with the most serious issues and problems of life. The purely technical and executive side of these arts appealed less to him, and so, to take one instance, he soon outgrew his early enthusiasm for Swinburne, wondered "whether he ever actually gets there," and was even too severe in revulsion. Intentional obscurity irritated him. Mallarmé and his school he would not attempt to understand. His suspicions indeed were well founded, for at the last Mallarmé in his lecture on "La Musique et les Lettres" had arrived at forecasting a new future for music when the sound and rhythm of words would replace the more clumsy and material tones of instruments.

Browning and Meredith repelled him by their style, though they attracted him by their subjects and method of treatment. Some of his letters on literature can be quoted here, as this side of his gifts is little represented in reviews. It will be seen that he talks less of the style and form, than of



the temper and insight of the three great romancers, Meredith, Hugo, and Hardy. He is still intent, as they are, on the special kind of subject, "man's inhumanity to women," which we have seen absorbing him. Meredith was not widely read in Oxford in the early eighties by the younger men, though he had always had a small and impassioned public there since 1870. In our time he was rarely quoted. He was too strong for tender youth; and any "scholar" or worshipper of pure form or arbiter of elegancies could preach on Meredith's harshness and quaintness, and wish that he were more considerately feeble. Johnstone's tone when at twenty-five, in 1886, he writes of Meredith is decisive enough, though his words would now be taken as a repetition of the obvious.

"Rhoda Fleming," he writes, "left me with increased wonder that its author has not a more generally recognised position. He is the only living English prose-writer with a real mind-kingdom of his own. The story moves like fate—as inevitably, as cruelly (the white sacrifice!), but just misses being dramatic. Why does he not write a play? He could; perhaps something better than has been done for centuries."

A year earlier he had written:—"When you

say Hugo is 'so false' you must mean not quite practical. Mrs. Gaskell's 'Ruth' is 'false' if you like, as well as irrelevant. Its real tendency is the reverse of the authoress' ostensible purpose. The woman becomes a partner in a union perfectly unpolluted and humane, but unauthorised, and even this is made inevitable. The Quaker element then turns it into tragedy, and the climax is effected by a person who is a sufficiently remarkable instance of a figure created by an apostle of mild propriety. He would have upset the whole scheme of the Redemption by making the good Jesus sin the sin of hate. This worthy, but rather Pharisaical Methodist—this large-boned man of substance who makes responses louder than anyone else—this nameless monster, whose foul-mouthed brawling on discovery of the woman's history while under him as a governess, is made the insult in answer to which her protector produces the *plea* (which is the purpose of the book); who, perhaps, takes his place as the best type in fiction of the most hateful character that the varying conditions of climate and creed ever yet conspired to produce on this, God's flowery earth—comes duly in for his share in the comprehensive wash-brush at the finish. By the simple expedient of turning his hair from

black to white he is qualified for service at the heroine's peaceful tomb, where he joins in dropping the charitable tear.

"The beautiful touches in this work are the seal of its futility, arising as they do from the character of Ruth—an impossible incarnation of all the virtues and graces—a sort of virgin mother, at last in fact a crowned saint; and I cannot believe in her story, perhaps from being too young. It may be that the remembrance of Ruth and other such works, while reading *Fantine*, misled me; that the escape from the high-pew and hassock flavour of Methodism to Hugo's 'prophetic soul of the wide world' blinded. Yet, when a work like '*Les Misérables*,' with the prodigious activity of its dramatic impulse, takes in its sweep the story of *Fantine*, something may surely be expected, if ever a writer is to be adequate on such a subject, and, I cannot but think, rightly. The 'eternal Priestess of Humanity blasted for the Sins of the People'—*Fantine* is just the thought dramatised.

"Essentially hopeless and inexorable, surpassing the limit of horror permissible in art. . . . And still the nameless agonies of the martyr's death are forgotten for the angel-benediction at her grave. And is it nothing to have achieved that this benediction

should have been possible after such a life? . . .

“Yes, ‘Les Misérables,’ notwithstanding incidental impossibilities, albeit ever in extremes, looms in my mind as incomparably the greatest thing in fiction with which I am acquainted, and the longer ago it gets since I read it and the more I read, the stronger this impression grows. It seemed to me that the touches of truth in this ‘false’ work were quite fearful in their power; such, for instance, of that gang of convicts being jolted by in the van, ‘their heads knocking together.’ He produces the physical effects of actual presence at what he describes. Of course, it violates every possible canon from the ‘Unities’ downwards; in fact, it might almost be made the basis of a new law of multiplicities.”

Some years later, in 1892, he wrote his impression on reading Hardy’s masterpiece: “I have just finished ‘Tess of the D’Urbervilles.’ You may have noticed a passage in Vol. I. running thus (chap. xvi.):— ‘Long thatched sheds stretched round the enclosure, their slopes encrusted with vivid green moss, and their eaves supported by wooden posts rubbed to a glossy smoothness by the flanks of infinite cows and calves of bygone years, *now passed to an oblivion almost inconceivable in its profundity.*’

“ If a man speaks so of *cattle* how must he feel towards his human brothers and sisters ! How strong must be in him that profoundest of poetic passions, the ‘*caerent quia vate sacro*’ feeling ! For, no doubt, sometimes in these quiet country places a heart of such gold as Tess’s throbs away in complete obscurity its allotted number of pulses. Our temper has altered from the time when this emotion was dismissed with a ‘Let not ambition mock their useful toil,’ etc., and Hardy has fully realised the appalling paths of such tragedies in humble life. ‘This time,’ he seems to have said, ‘this time no mincing and no hedging. Let the disdainful smilers and those others who shift all responsibilities on to Providence look to themselves.’

“ There are passages of infinite pathos in this story : the ‘too-late’ meeting of Tess with Angel Clare in the sea-side lodging, and the terrific scene immediately after, when Angel is gone and she is left to sob out her distraction ; where Tess says to Angel, ‘Why didn’t you stay and love me when I was sixteen with my little sisters and brothers?’ :— the long letter she writes about a year after Angel has left her, and where she practises the ballads that he had liked best, while working in the field, ‘the tears running down her cheeks all the while at the



thought that, perhaps, he would not after all come to hear her, and the silly words of the songs resounding in painful mockery of the aching heart of the singer.' And, earlier, the baptising by Tess of her own infant, and—perhaps lying nearest of all to the fountain of tears—those glimpses of her early innocence. 'Tess's pride would not allow her to turn her head again to learn what her father's meaning was, if he had any, and thus she moved on with the whole body to the enclosure where there was to be dancing on the green' . . . when one knows against what fate the poor girl is going! But is it not all just a little too cruel? To represent such adorable goodness, and sweetness, and faithfulness as being rewarded with the actual *gibbet*—is not this a little hard, even on Providence? The unsparingly tragic ending is not the only thing, nor even the main thing that distinguishes this from other stories dealing with the same sort of subject.

"In George Eliot's Hetty we evidently have to do with a character quite other than Tess's. The imputation of depravity attached to the fact that Hetty, when scarcely more than a child, looked long in the glass and thought how fine it would be to be a lady—this seems to me an exceedingly

miserable evidence of the somewhat crude vice of character by which, notwithstanding George Eliot's immense genius, her sympathy with the simple-hearted was, in certain cases, marred or destroyed. But Hetty's character must be taken as it is revealed in action and intention, and she abandons her infant, whereas the soul of Tess goes out in an agony of endeavour to preserve hers, and, long after its death, she exposes herself to ridicule by tending its outcast's grave. In Hetty's dreams and schemes, again no thought of her parents and people or hope of bettering their lot has place, while Tess at the darkest moment of her *via dolorosa*—at Stonehenge, just before God finally forsakes her—thinks of her sister 'Liza-Lu, and secures a protector for those she is leaving behind.

"Scott is, of course, without a trace of George Eliot's defect, and always treats Effie Deans like a gentleman. By certain touches, too, he indicates how deep is his concern for her, such as that crowd of blackguards and urchins about the court-house, for whose holiday Effie was so nearly murdered. But besides the fact that Scott has no true grasp of feminine character, he makes Jeanie his heroine and never really undertakes to tell Effie's story. And George Eliot, after disposing of Hetty in a hurry, actually offers to



interest us in the love affairs of that preaching woman! In *Fantine* there are details perhaps more intolerable to hear than this story of *Hardy's*, but the general effect is less strong. For partly we distrust *Hugo's* rhetoric, and besides, we are beguiled and consoled at the end, however unreasonably, by his 'fortunately God knows where to look for graves,' while in '*Tess*' the concluding incidents come with a thunderbolt inevitableness, and at the end nothing stands between us and the hideous ignominy, the entire forgetfulness, the utter nakedness. But though her life has become forfeit, perhaps that ignominy of the actual gibbet might have been spared. In any case, there is nothing to be said at the end of such a tale but—

"Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry,

\* \* \* \* \*

And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted!"

Yet let us not find fault, for terrible as it is to find a man who, discarding the tradition that it is the office of poets to soothe and amuse their fellow-prisoners with pretty fables and tales of the governor's beneficence—a man who rejects this almost universal tradition and appals his hearers with an account of malignant treacheries committed by that governor—yet

I sympathise with the temper that does this, and believe that it has its roots in a genuine and manly feeling, the feeling that I tried to suggest at the beginning.

"Hardy is a strong example of that curious, inverted Manichæism so characteristic of our time—a sort of mediæval horror of the grossness of matter, balanced by a most unmediæval sense of the utter madness of insulting and despising matter, seeing that the tyranny of it is absolute.

"He is perhaps the first Briton to write as a true man of the people on such a subject, that is to say, to take it quite seriously. His story is told with such passion that almost every particle of doctrinaire affectation or easy pattern work is consumed and refined away, and he has created in *Tess* the most inexpressibly pathetic figure that I know of in literature."

About Zola he writes in a letter of July, 1893 :—

"Perhaps you have read '*Le Rêve*.' It and '*La Débâcle*' are the only two of Zola's longer novels that could be recommended to a lady, and even the latter with some misgiving. I cannot say that I think '*Le Rêve*' one of Zola's best works. I am far from sure that the French critic who said: '*Nous préférons Monsieur Zola à quatre*

pattes' was not in the right. Nevertheless, there are passages in it stamped by Zola's unique greatness. With regard to its defects, I would rather say nothing at present, except one—the end strikes me as absurd, *franchement mauvais et du placage littéraire*—a recrudescence of something that we have left far behind, something dead that should have been left to bury its dead. All the same there are, I think, truly great things in the book."

Of Marie Bashkirtseff, September, 1891, he writes :—

"Concerning Marie Bashkirtseff, she seems to me to have had nearly every gift except two, namely imagination and heart. Above all, a sort of critical intuition, which prevented her from ever resting satisfied in anything second-rate. She was a typical little Russian, small of stature, dark of tint ; in temperament sensitive, romantic, versatile ; unlike the northern Russians, who are prevalently tall and fair and have a certain contempt for the unpractical. Nearly the whole Russian harvest of folk-songs and cognate treasure comes from the south, from Cossacks and little Russians, the true Muscovite being almost a songless bird. Marie must have had in a high degree the incomparable\* grace and distinction of her country-women, with

that wonderful animation and 'fever of life' which makes the atmosphere of Russian society the warmest and brightest in the world. As to your statement that 'some of her failings, like her love of luxury and her desire to be attended to at all costs, are pure vanity and wormwood.' I have always stuck up for this barbaric element, and believe that largely on it depends the prodigious formative power of a *free feminine influence*—that thing of such rarity as to be almost non-existent in our puritanical society. I know a man at half a glance who has ever been under it."

Referring to his correspondent's remarks that Russians seem to look at religious questions like intelligent children, he writes:—

"Did you ever hear of the Soo-ré-ye-vites, the sect of which Leo Tolstoi is a member?"

"Soorayeff was a peasant ignorant of reading and writing. He had read in church 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth,' and by pure sympathy and unaided intelligence he jumped to the conclusion that Jesus Christ meant what He said. Think of the prodigious freshness of nature and the promise that this shows.

"There are the five hundred sects of Great Britain all accepting the same fundamental absurdities, and yet this simple man, never

having heard of criticism, is enabled to penetrate the viewless veil, woven by the years and the churches over the face of the Son of Man, so as to understand that Christ actually meant that God was a Spirit.

“Suppose a missionary went among a savage tribe and tried to teach them what Justice is ; told them he himself was a son of Justice, and that Justice was made manifest in him ; lastly, that Justice is a spirit. Suppose he came back after an absence and found the people teaching that Justice was three persons and burning alive those who did not accept this view !”

In England, unless it were in London, Johnstone seldom felt at home ; in Scotland, still less. He liked to wander from one easy variegated foreign city to another, where good music and good plays are quickly accessible, and British convention is a mere figure in the comic papers. He valued his friends in Edinburgh, but the place displeased him. He would sit on Arthur's seat and hate the modern Athens steaming there below him. Its curious old mossy layers of culture, professional and academic, could hardly satisfy him, and he quickly got through the moss to the stone. The ferment of the young “Celtic” writers and painters seemed to come to little. He did not inure himself to

the occasionally inconsiderate manners of the Lowland Scotch, nor could he bring himself to repay them steadily in kind. Some of the officials with whom he dealt appeared to have been born, where they would die, in Gath. He would hardly agree with, but he could understand the unqualified remark of his old French associate, "*Il n'y a pas d'amour dans ce pays.*" Probably he was unjust to Edinburgh; but though his forbears were partly Scotch, he was not, like Stevenson, born Scotch, and he never really saw the native character from within. Teaching may not have been the best introduction to it. He taught well, having the right sort of delivery and insistent method. But it is disgusting to an artist to teach anything for bread, except, perhaps, his own craft. The hard work, the pull on the nerves and patience, can scarcely have strengthened Johnstone's health.

Indeed, wherever he lived he had a touch of the exile. He dwelt really in some region not of this earth at all, where the masters of music sit in their Valhalla, where the hard waste matter that makes up most of our life is eliminated, while the essence of its pain and pleasure is distilled through art and presented in sublime purity of form. The saint has his vision of



personal goodness, the philosopher his of systematic truth, the reformer his of a new society. The artist—for the term must be extended to those who perceive as well as those who produce—has his ideal vision, which varies in form with his special art. It follows that the valuable part of actual life, to such a temper, is made up of such stray hours of vivid experience and intelligence as, taken together, give some notion of that other world. We had written “moments” instead of “hours,” but the former word would be misleading, with the false suggestion of fleeting passive sensation, for which Walter Pater, or rather those who misinterpret him, must answer. Every experience, in truth, whether moral, sensuous, or intellectual, that is, of real worth, contributes to the artist’s dream. Johnstone posed so little and lived by this principle so naturally and unwittingly that he could not be called a doctrinaire. But few men save up their vital impressions about everything so carefully, engraving them patiently on the memory, and dismissing the vast mass of experience that tells us nothing. Hence Johnstone was never quite naturalised in any abode, though he managed to be sociable and festive when the chances came. In Edinburgh, however, for the reasons given, he stayed over long, and we may



regret that he was not sooner freed from teaching school.

Practically, there was some compensation for so late an escape. The teacher's attitude, as of one clearly laying down the law, remained in much of his press work, and to its advantage. The public as a whole, though it must not be told so, is like a large, impatient, grumbling, half-ignorant class of schoolboys. Reviewing is therefore educational work. Not that the dominie-tone is wanted; for that is the worst of faults, even in school-teaching! But the teacher does not take his class into the secret of his own doubts, hesitations, or revulsions; he gives his results, he gives what he thinks the truth. Or, if a figure from another calling be preferred, the critic *operates*, beneficently if often without anæsthetics. Further, there was something to be said for the late specialisation of Johnstone's ruling talent. His nature was rich; his articles have the style of a man who has lived, as well as one who knows his trade. No youth, though ever so clever, could have made them. He treats music as a means by which all the emotions, whether large and solemn, or light and happy, or sombre, or perverse, are transformed, often out of recognition, into their counterparts in sound; so that the kinds of joy and pain given by music, like those given

by high drama but in a rarer measure, are stripped of any stinging personal reference, while unweakened in force. The hearer is thus mysteriously shown, as Rossetti says, the "road he came," and yet has no more, for the time, to do with himself, save in so far as he is one of a thousand men to whom the music interprets their experience, widely and deeply. Therefore, to understand music, a man must have suffered. Johnstone had met and weathered some of the suffering which an intense nature, even under conditions easier than his, must absolutely meet with on this earth, and must either give in to and go under, or must get over and appropriate—there is no choice! He chose the latter way, being strong enough, and so became a better musical critic.

Besides, his bent for music was growing more marked during the last years in Edinburgh. It was clear to his friends what his profession ought to be, and his chance of adopting it came at the end of 1895. The musical critic of the *Manchester Guardian*, Mr. Fremantle, died; and it was hard to find a successor who would stamp his own mark and make the critical judgments of the paper a power, in the musical capital in the North of England. Johnstone had already written for the *Manchester Guardian* articles of sundry

kinds; a review of the translation of Nietzsche, part of which is reprinted in this book, and a notice on Tolstoi; as well as on musical matters. York Powell was foremost in commending his friend to the editor as a man of worth and high special talent. An offer was sent to Johnstone, which he weighed with even more than his usual deliberation. He felt the break with his friends in Scotland, and he had misgivings, being a slow writer and not fond of his pen, as to his power to work under journalistic conditions. As even his letters show, he composed carefully and was a master of exact expression; thus he felt some anxiety at having to work under the pressure of a time limit, and that too at a late hour. He therefore sent, without in any way jumping at the offer as an escape from usherdom, a dignified reply that gave an impression of his quality. It was not easy for his friends to make him decide with the necessary haste. In the end he accepted the proposal, much to their relief, and came to Manchester in January, 1896. There he stayed for the rest of his life.

In Manchester, Johnstone's existence and outlook were quite altered. He had not to wait until the daily chare was over before he could turn to music, which now took up his force and time for the working part of the

year. He had taught well, but others could have done that. Now, for nine years, he gave himself to the work for which he was built, and which few could do so well. Certainly no one did it in quite his way. The union of temperament, knowledge, style, gave him an 'accent of his own. His lore and his sensibility always grew and enriched each other. He did not wholly limit himself to music, and before passing to this his chief occupation, we may note his activity elsewhere. It was too much to hope he would have any great distracting interest. Music is enough and more for one man. But he spared some time for literature. He had a swift preference even as a boy for all that was fresh, vehement, and strange in modern drama and fiction. He was not at all like the complacent, young, up-to-date college tutor, who reads the latest exotic writers, but remains unaltered. Johnstone, if he liked a play or story at all, was seized and shaken; a kind of enthusiasm which is a better preface to a true judgment than any amount of accomplished and balanced coldness, or the pseudo-"judicial" frame of mind. He was not so fond of poetry, or so sure in his perception of it, caring too little for purely verbal in contrast with accompanied or wordless music. We have reprinted above, however, a part of

his lecture on the scientific frontier between the two arts. He found time also, when the press of the season was over, for some byplay as a reviewer. He wrote in commanding style about books on conjuring, on billiards, and on cooking. He used to say that cooking was his real gift. To go to a certain café and quote Mr. Johnstone's name, was to ensure a respectful and an even terrified service; and the well-drilled waiter would commend a particular sauce-bottle as that which his distinguished customer had used. But he remembered, with more pleasure than banquets, having slept on shelves with the Cretan rebels in the mountains, and sharing and digesting their extremely dried fish. He also wrote on weighty matters outside music; the chief of these were English and German plays. The companies that travelled from the Fatherland to the Germanic city of the British Empire, and acted in the Schiller-Anstalt, often played pieces involving actual dialect. Johnstone's familiarity with German, as well as his natural sympathy with writers like Hauptmann (and Sudermann in a less degree), marked him out as the right reviewer. Plays, like concerts, have to be noticed in hot haste on the very evening; or, at best, if given on Saturday, by the following evening; for so much expedition is the



minotaur-public of a daily paper supposed to stipulate. The work done on such terms is not always the worst in substance, though only long wont can give the kind of finish or varnish that is desired. The same remark applies to musical reviewing; but Johnstone's distrust of himself was needless. The result was more in accordance with the expectation of his friends than with his own. Many of his articles were written at great speed, and as one of his colleagues said, if it had been possible for him to wait till he felt he could do justice to the subject, most of them would never have been written at all.

Before passing to his main labours as a journalist, we may here quote, in illustration, part of the notice that he wrote on the *Johannisfeuer* of Sudermann. Our reprints in this book deal almost wholly with music, and, as we have said, he thought of music as a comment, at several removes and after strange distillations, on life and experience. But the drama, which is a copy of life, not indeed a direct one, but subject to the laws of theatrical art, also engrossed him, especially when it was at once modern in form and homely and passionate in theme.

The Bavarian peasants and their girls still jump through the dying embers of their bonfires on the eve of St. John:—

*“For the truth is Mr. Parson, a remnant of heathenism stirs in the blood of us all. It has persisted through all the centuries since ancient Germanic times, and, once a year, it blazes up with the fire of St. John’s Eve. For that night the spooks of ancient heathenism are unchained. Witches ride on broomsticks, instead of being beaten with them, and pass through the air, with mocking laughter, on their way to the Blocksberg. The Wild Hunt scours over the forest and wilder desires over our hearts—all that is most frenzied and most utterly doomed to non-fulfilment. No matter what the order may be that for the time being reigns in the world, for one single heart’s desire to be realised, and to give us something to live on, a thousand others must go to ruin, not only for the ever unattainable, but others, allowed to escape from a hand that held them too carelessly. Yes, those bonfires which blaze up—do you know what they are? They are the spectres of our heart’s desires, the red-winged birds of paradise that we might have kept by us for life but allowed to escape, the spooks of the old order, of the heathenism that is in us. However satisfied we may be in the light of day and beneath the reign of law and order, this is St. John’s Eve in the night sacred to Midsummer Madness. I drink to your ancient heathen fires. Let them blaze high! Will no one clink glasses with me?”—*  
(Act. iii., sc. 3.)

“So the title ‘Johannisfeuer,’ with its double meaning, literal and symbolical, must be rendered into English—according as we



wish to lay stress on the former or the latter—‘The Bonfires of St. John’s Eve’ or ‘Midsummer Madness.’ On seeing the remarkably fine performance of this play the non-German spectator, impressed with the general worthlessness of German drama since the Augustan age (that is, the age of Goethe and Schiller), might well wonder how it is possible for a German writer to produce such a thing—a play, simple and unpretentious in design, yet fraught through and through with poetic beauty; a play written with northern sharpness of characteristic and, at the same time, with Italian warmth, eloquence, and keenness of sympathy with the moods of nature; a play distinctly Ibsenesque in structure and largely also in style, yet, for all its sombre colouring, not haggard and aghast, like nearly all the products of the Scandinavian’s demonic spirit. The scene is in a farm in East Prussia, in a neighbourhood with a mixed population of Germans, Poles, and Lithuanians. The name of the farmer’s family is Vogelreuther. Marikke, a Lithuanian gipsy girl, is a foster-child in their house, having been picked up along with her mother and carried home by Mr. and Mrs. Vogelreuther in their sledge during the famine winter of 1867. In the house she is known as Heimchen (the Cricket) and in the

neighbourhood as the 'famine child.' In the farm-house lives a young man named George, an orphan nephew of Vogelreuther, indebted to the famine for his upbringing. In the opening of the play George has made a good start in life, having been apprenticed to an architect in Königsberg and done well. He is betrothed to the farmer's daughter Gert-rude, but some years before there had been a love affair between him and Heimchen, who had repulsed him hastily, not because she did not care for him, but because she did not believe in the honesty of his intentions. While busying herself with preparations for her foster-sister's coming marriage, Heimchen discovers a manuscript book belonging to George and containing verses and a diary. She cannot resist the temptation to read, and she thus discovers that George had loved her deeply and seriously, despite the difference in their standing. Heimchen's mother—a besotted and thievish old woman—haunts the neighbourhood, and has been recognised by her daughter. Heimchen has been told that her mother is dead, but knows better. Meetings with the terrible old woman reawaken the gipsy instincts in Heimchen. George loves her still at heart, and circumstances draw the two together. The crisis is

reached on the night of St. John's eve, when after an evening in which the whole neighbourhood, lit up with bonfires, is given over to punch drinking, dancing, and excitement. George is requested by the unsuspecting farmer to escort Heimchen to the railway station, she having a night train to catch to Königsberg. The ending is intensely Ibsenesque in style. George, on the very day fixed for his wedding with Gertrude, is ready to fly with Heimchen, but, mindful of the immense obligations binding them both to the farmer's family, he insists that there shall be at least an explanation. Heimchen, instinctively grasping the difference between a man's and a woman's love, foresees the regrets that would result from the overthrow of George's plans. She changes her attitude and forbids him to speak to the farmer. The St. John fires are burnt out. The midsummer madness is over. It is now for her to return to duty and dulness and the burden of a starved heart. For life she must remain satisfied with her one night of bliss on St. John's eve. So she stands alone and watches the departure of George's and Gertrude's wedding procession.

"The great scene of the play, in which Heimchen and George are left alone together, is managed with wonderful stagecraft. Till

the last moment they seem to be adhering to 'good resolutions,' but a series of incidents, all absolutely natural, occur to distract attention and cause delay, till they hear the whistle of the train and know that it is too late. The bonfires, the punch-drinking, and, above all, George's speech, from which the quotation at the head of these notes is taken, have fired their blood, and Heimchen is unstrung by the painful meeting with her disreputable mother earlier in the day, when she had been obliged to buy back things that her mother had pilfered. At last she throws herself on her knees before George and says, 'Du! Küß' mich nicht! Ich will dich küssen. Ich will alles auf mich nehmen. Meine Mutter stiehlt. Ich stehl' auch'—and the curtain falls."

To return to the date of Johnstone's arrival at the *Guardian* office in Manchester, where he was made welcome. He found friends upon the staff, and kept them in spite of his want of sympathy with some of the political views of the paper. On politics he never wrote, except when recording matters of fact on his mission to the Greco-Turkish war. But, not to speak of living persons, he was brought for some years into close contact with one of the best-equipped and finest-

tempered journalists of our time. William Thomas Arnold, the son of Thomas, and nephew of Matthew Arnold, was one of the two or three men, senior to himself, in his personal circle, for whom Johnstone had a profound regard both as a man and as a master-craftsman. This regard was well-deserved. An authoritative scholar in the history of the early Roman Empire, a critic who cast original light on Keats and some of the Jacobean poets, at home in Dryden, in the French literature both of the great century and the romantic age, abreast also of criticism in both countries, and a sound vigorous judge of acting and the drama, Arnold made time to share the daily burdens and aid in sustaining the high uncompromising standards of a newspaper whose many foes have never questioned its consistent and iron courage during the last ten years. Arnold often stood to Johnstone in the capacity of actual editorial chief for the evening. It is hateful to be edited, even to the change of a comma, except where errors of fact or risks of libel are in question. Political contributions are another thing; a common line—the “view of the paper”—must be adhered to, and self-sacrifice in detail, within large limits, is simply necessary. That is warfare; you may resign your commission,



but, if you do not, must accept instructions. But in art and letters! The mutual respect of the two men may be measured by the freedom that was left to Johnstone, and by the spirit in which he, rightly the most sensitive of men in such concerns and naturally irritable, took the occasional blue-pencillings. His other colleagues also held Johnstone in regard, in spite of the vehemence with which he went his own way. Sometimes he would come in from the concert, like an instrument whose strings are still quivering at full pitch, and this is not the mood for rapid committee work at night. There might be one great explanation from time to time which cleared the air. It was seen that he was thinking of his subject, and not of his own vanity, and that he was immensely, indignantly, and delightfully wrapped up in that subject. On the whole it was a good training for him, and few strong men, beginning at the age of thirty-four, would have shown themselves, despite occasional rubs, so reasonably adaptive. It may also be said that few newspapers would have stood so well by a writer who, whenever he felt it his duty to do so, would promptly perturb the musical hive, careless whether drone or hornet minded. Mr. John Morley, who ought to know, has expressed some doubt as to whether

journalism tends to special elevation of character. There are cases where the doubt does not arise. When the critic, on artistic, and therefore on public, grounds, and with due store of knowledge, raises a fury by his condemnations, and when the editor, who has to think of his paper and its standing, supports the critic, believing him likely to be right, that is a good evening's work. The scope therefore granted to Johnstone as a journalist by his editor was a proof of sagacity, for he became a power in the musical community, not only of Manchester but of the larger region the *Manchester Guardian* reaches. No doubt, though he was allowed as free a hand in expressing his opinions as any other of his craft, and a much freer one than the majority, he sometimes wearied of the necessary restrictions of a journalist's position and their deadening effect upon the mind. An outburst, expressive of a deep and recurring mood, occurs in a letter of January, 1902, written on his return to Manchester, and describing a day he had spent in London with York Powell.

"There is now no one in this neighbourhood with whom I can *converse*. I find myself permanently in the journalistic attitude, regarding it as luck if I can say two per cent. of what I think about anything; so the



meeting with Powell was an oasis at the end of some very sandy months."

This complaint was laid not against the paper he served, but against the sparseness of the kind of society he liked best. To understand it some curious features of life in Manchester must be recalled. He used at times to come to a small society of friends, which lasted for eight or nine years, and met during the business year at about monthly intervals, at the members' dwellings, for free conversation. He is remembered as having there discoursed on Tolstoy's conceptions of art with his usual energy and elaboration. The stringent mad-logic of the great art-hater had once attracted, but at last disgusted him, and he saw that even Tolstoy's famed novels, with their show of godlike equity, really held the seed of his later prejudices against science, art, and sexual love. But such occasions when he could talk freely seemed to grow rarer. The fault lay somewhat, no doubt, in his own radical solitariness of mind, but also in the surrounding conditions.

Huge Manchester, almost a metropolis, is full of force, full of mental as well as commercial stir; it is not, no, it is not! a *social* city. If it ever learns how to amuse itself, it will really be that; it will be a

metropolis. The reasons of the defect are partly physical. It has an air, a rainfall, a climate, and an aspect, that do not make for good spirits. The suburbs lie far apart in a ring round the business crater, which becomes dark and most unfestive after ten o'clock at night, and which those who cannot drive think twice of crossing. Also there is an unfused mixture of races and classes. Apart from Greeks and Armenians, who stand apart from one another and from other nations, there are the German and other Jews on one side, and the Germans who are not Jews markedly on another side. There are the big Lancashire money-makers, of the soil; the shopkeepers and the vast clerkly multitude; the professional classes, or castes; and the hand-workers, rough, but in essential breeding and wits perhaps the soundest of all. For social purposes many of these elements do not count. It is the Germans, the Jews, and the professional classes, with many of the intelligent business men in a large way, who probably civilise Manchester, in the stricter sense of the term. It is as civilised an English city as can be found in England outside London, if the press, the libraries, the university, the theatres, and the music, be all weighed together. But its bent hardly lies towards society, in the sense of ringing,

collective, intellectually disinterested talk, or towards gaiety of the more bearable kind. There is ample dining, dancing, and official entertainment, but those are not enough for salvation. The vast number of philanthropic, educational, religious, and political agencies, which fill playtime with labour for the good of mankind or party, entitle the city to be called great and progressive, but they do not precisely make it blithe. They inspire respect, and no one who has not lived there many years can realise their number or the strenuous, positive, character of the place; the southern nature seems soft and vague in comparison. But the free talk of the real capitals, and their resources for witty amusement, imply a large leisured class, an element of *flâneurs* in the population, which is hardly possible in a big North-English city. There is personal isolation in a curious measure—a want of rallying points for talk. The atoms repel each other and fly apart. Men go home to their families or rooms and stop there. If they go out, it is often for some “meeting” of an earnest description, not to amuse themselves; or, if they wish to do this, they go to music, which is a somewhat solitary pleasure. Talk, for the satisfaction of talking, is less common. There are exceptions; but this is the impression given by long residence in

Manchester. The Germans, with their club and singing and cheerfulness, have done their best for their adopted city. But it was hard for a cosmopolitan person like Arthur Johnstone, at once deeply bent on art and beauty of all kinds, and also demanding some kind of cheerful foreign life in the intervals of work, to find his account quickly in his new abode, and the opinion of it we have recorded above is largely his own.

For some time, therefore, he felt that Manchester was admirable rather than refreshing. It had found for him the work of his life ; he soon became a force in his own calling ; he had friends, new as well as old, in the place ; and he liked it better, as time passed, and as he managed to find some of the intelligent festiveness that he wanted. Gradually he touched several quite different circles, chiefly doubtless the musical, but others also, journalistic, academic, and professional. Except with a few, Johnstone made his way somewhat slowly in society. He could be outspoken, uncompromising, and even explosive (though he never attacked unless he thought there was provocation). These characteristics and his daring line as a critic, both in talk and print, caused him to be under-estimated by some otherwise intelligent persons. He might

have said, with Saint-Simon, that he was not "un sujet académique." He disliked dons as a class; at Oxford and elsewhere they made him, of course wrongly, restive. He had not been through their mill, and they did not always care for or see his curious and original play of mind. Their committee-trained caution of phrase was alarmed by his emphasis and heavy-shotted superlatives, which merely amused his friends. There were, of course, those among them who liked him well. In some houses he had, apart from his musical gifts, a certain name for being "clever and spiky." The latter epithet was only partially true, for he was simple-hearted and good-natured the moment that the occasion arose. "His sympathy," writes Madame de Navarro (Miss Mary Anderson), "never failed, and his unaffected love and enthusiasm for the good, the true, and the beautiful, could always be counted upon." All who had eyes saw this in Johnstone, but all had not eyes. He was interested, absorbed, whelmed in his subject, and thought instinctively more about ideas and purposes than about persons, so that he sometimes ignored persons and therefore dissatisfied them. He also said, what is true, that of the provinces, as compared with the capital, "the favourite sin is cowardice."



This, and any semblance of snobbery, he openly despised. He liked to have power and weight—and was right in liking it—in order to carry out certain musical reforms. But he dismissed at once anyone who, as he put it, “may be very well-informed, yet clearly cares nothing at all for things in themselves, but simply and solely to be a person of consideration.” So, except as a musical critic, his measure, for good reasons, was not invariably taken. He knew this fact, and felt it with some keenness, but not from the side of disappointed conceit. He thought it was his lot in life not to be able to talk freely and acceptably save to a very few persons. He was sorry, but convinced that thus he was built. The old Oxford sense of solitariness—and Oxford leaves dregs in the cup for these her sensitive children—does not easily let go its victim. The happiness and success of the latter years, however, were to leave him markedly easier, mellowed, and more communicative. He was, indeed, fully entering on his own when he was cut down. But a larger and more various experience than ever yet, both of thought and travel, was to be his lot within the last eight years of his short life.

In April, 1897, Johnstone made his appearance in a new capacity. The dispute

between Greece and Turkey over the treatment of the Christians in Crete had reached an acute stage and war was expected to break out at any moment. The *Manchester Guardian*, more than any other English newspaper, had championed the Greek cause. Naturally the proprietors wished to secure the best and fullest accounts of the operations and to have them despatched in advance of other papers. Mr. J. B. Atkins was chosen to accompany the army in the field, and Johnstone's knowledge of modern languages and acquaintance with Eastern Europe marked him out as a valuable colleague. He was posted at Athens to receive reports from the front, to arrange all the details connected with their transmission, and to review the progress of the war, work which he carried through very successfully. His gift of tongues, which once caused him to be congratulated in Germany on "speaking English so well," enabled him soon to get a working knowledge of modern Greek; he was fortunate too in finding a Greek gentleman, who, grateful for the attitude of the *Manchester Guardian*, acted as his interpreter and showed him about the city. The same friend was on intimate terms with the Royal family, and introduced Johnstone to the King and the Duke of Sparta. At the close of his stay at



Athens, he hesitatingly asked if there was any return he could make for the various kindnesses he had received, when this friend of royalty named so modest a fee that Johnstone was staggered; "it was the *pourboire* of a head-waiter," he said afterwards when describing the incident, adding that he had never realised what true democracy meant until then. Among his associates there was the correspondent of a Viennese paper who had somehow incurred the dislike and suspicion of the war-party, but, as Johnstone thought, unjustly. At last his life was openly threatened; there was no hope for him unless he managed to leave the country at once, and even then there was a fair chance that he might never reach the ship alive. Johnstone, being on good terms with the patriotic party, pleaded for his life and undertook to get him away; he cycled behind him for the four miles from Athens to the Piræus, and when they reached the harbour kept the mob off until he was safely on board an Austrian Lloyd steamer. The ride was an exciting one, for it was expected that an attempt would be made to shoot the obnoxious correspondent on the way down to the port; some shots were actually fired, but went wide of the mark. When the war was nearing the end Johnstone's services were not so

necessary at Athens, and he went to join Mr. Atkins in camp ; but he saw no fighting, for the day after his arrival peace was declared. His colleague returned to England, and Johnstone spent some weeks in Crete to investigate the stories of those atrocities which had been the immediate cause of the war. He went *sac au dos* like J. K. Huysmans in 1870, but unlike him, roughed it with good humour and looked upon hardships of this kind as a helpful and valuable experience. A year later when congratulating a friend, who was somewhat habit-ridden, on his marriage, he wrote, "The problem of changing one's habits is emphatically one of those to be solved '*ambulando*.' The forms of ambulation best adapted to the purpose are serving on a campaign, doing time 'with,' and getting married ;" admitting, however, that the last, though less drastic, was more permanent in its effect.

Of the stay in Crete he always spoke as the best holiday of his life. He was struck with the beauty both of the lowlands and the hills, and predicted the day when the isle would be one of the great resorts of Europe. The mountaineers redeemed for him the modern Greek race, which his experience in Athens had led him to scorn utterly. He thought that the citizen and official class

were shifty and mendacious, and his epithets were Juvenalian in vigour. The hillmen were of another race, in body and spirit, and he loved sharing their hardy life. It is right to add that he exempted the ordinary Greek soldier on the mainland from the condemnation which he reserved for the officers. Some considerable time he spent on the water, chartering a small steamer in order to coast up near the seat of war. Before making his way homeward he went to Constantinople, and the surface view, at any rate, of the Turk pleased him well. He returned home in unusually buoyant health and wearing a moustache, having fallen under the spell of Eastern prejudice against the clean-shaved.

At the beginning of the musical season in October, 1898, a considerable storm was raised in Manchester by the action of the guarantors of the Hallé concerts, who had offered the post of conductor to Dr. Richter, instead of renewing Dr. Cowen's appointment. It fell to Johnstone to write the two leading articles on the subject which appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* of October 4th and 17th. His clear and judicial summing up of the case left no room for questioning the right of the guarantors to act as they had done, while his special knowledge of Dr. Richter's

immense services to musical art enabled him to write with authority on the great chance now open for Manchester's acceptance. In short, the point at issue lay between sentimental considerations and the good of the community, and Johnstone very naturally declared for the latter. Our reference to this controversy is intentionally brief, but its importance at the time was considerable. Johnstone was now recognised as a leader of musical opinion in Manchester, a position and influence which became greatly extended in the years that followed.

There is no doubt as to the kind of power that he exerted. He did not touch the actual administration of music in Manchester, in the College of Music, or the Hallé concerts, or elsewhere. He did not directly advise, therefore, in the choice of programmes, players, or singers. But he went to every performance of the slightest note, whether popular or not, and wrote about it incisively and heedfully, always preferring to praise and interpret, but hitting very hard when he thought it imperative to do so. He went to the prize exhibitions of the college pupils, and reviewed them (omitting names) with a sympathetic ear for promise. He lectured, often very well, at Mr. Rowley's Sunday gatherings in Ancoats, and also in the History

Theatre of Owens College. As a lecturer, it may be observed, he suffered at times from having too much to say and failing to compress it perfectly. But he held an audience of unprofessional hearers with his sharply-cut and pungent style; and, in one respect he was a fortunately un-English lecturer, for his power of graphic gesture was quite noteworthy. These, however, were casual activities; presswork took almost all his strength. He did a vast amount of musical reviewing, and his room was stacked with the publications that he simply found it useless to criticise. But the notices of actual singing and playing were his main labour, as well as the pioneer articles on unknown or imperfectly appreciated works. These were of high value, and contain some of his best writing, being done at fuller leisure. As to the quality of his published utterances we may say no more; the articles we have saved for this book must speak for themselves. But, without doubt, his judgment was looked for, and welcomed or feared. He made it less easy for bad performers to come again. He was generous, preferring even a slight excess, to oncoming and unrecognised talent, or to remote and exotic kinds of talent which made the fashionable multitude impatient. He became the worthy and articulate voice



of musical opinion in and beyond one of the English capitals of the art.

We could hardly illustrate the kind of power that Johnstone exerted better than by quoting what Canon Gorton writes concerning his connection with the Morecambe musical festival:—

“Our festival was born in 1891. From the first it was organised entirely apart from any pecuniary object; it brought us some delightful music, as we set our own test pieces, and its aim was essentially educational. Our special correspondent from the *Manchester Guardian* did not arrive on the scene until 1899. We had grown accustomed to unstinted praise, the judges exhausted the adjectives in the language in describing the excellence of the singing, composers told us that they had never heard their part-songs so perfectly rendered. We thought we were perfect. Then came a bomb from the critic (April 27th, 1899). He was not in touch with us or cognisant with our aim, nor did he allow for our limitations. Much of the music seemed to him unworthy; the competitive or sporting element annoyed him; he saw rocks ahead, rocks on which others had been wrecked. He wrote: ‘The array of talent is no doubt imposing, but far too much of the music is of an inferior stamp. It should



not be forgotten that the end and aim of such festivals is to foster a taste for music. But the taste for inferior music needs no fostering. If, therefore, the organisers of these festivals prescribe second-rate works for the competitions, they simply destroy the *raison d'être* of these competitions. It is music as an art—not music as a sport or trade—that requires fostering. There is a danger that such concerts may degenerate into a vulgar pot-hunting business, and one would like to see everything done, both as regards the music prescribed and the conduct of the proceedings of the festival itself, to guard against that danger.' I do not claim to know much about music, but I recognise good English when I see it. I saw that 'our special correspondent' was a master of his craft. I replied at once in the *Manchester Guardian* rejecting his interpretation of our motives, and still more the motives which brought choirs to our Festival. I said that 'no chastening was joyous' and urged that the critic should have patience, that we were then walking and that some day we would run, and expressed a hope that he might be there to see. I afterwards called upon him at the Reform Club, and this commenced a friendship, the memory of which I shall always hold as a matter of pride. He hence-

forth became for us 'the critic.' We not only awaited his arrival, but in choice of music Mr. Howson (the choir-master) even applied an additional test: 'This will test the choir, but will it also satisfy Mr. Arthur Johnstone's taste?' The choir were conscious ever of his presence. The judges were in the box giving their awards, but 'Mr. Johnstone is in the grand circle, what does he think?' I heard him once appeal to his wife; 'Am I not always open to conviction?' With his first article in view, and with the knowledge of what subsequently he did for us, I could but allow that he made good his claim, for he became the most stalwart defender of our Morecambe musical festival—'a movement,' he wrote in 1903 'that is one of the most genuine and hopeful things in the musical England of to-day.' Again he complained that 'little or nothing has been done by the teachers of music in Manchester to encourage the musical revival that for a good many years had been going on in the North of England, and more particularly in Lancashire.' Later, he wrote a remarkable article in reply to the strictures of Mr. J. Spencer Curwen. Mr. Curwen had questioned whether our festivals help choral music in the long run, and proceeded to comfort us by saying that 'we were entering upon a dangerous path. The

more success you have, the nearer you will approach to the state of things which exists in Wales.' To this belated warning Mr. Johnstone replied (October 5th, 1903): 'The peculiar evils enumerated by Mr. Spencer Curwen as being fostered by competitions were observed a good many years ago by those who are organising meetings in North Lancashire. Indeed, one may say the observation of these evils was the point of departure in Lancashire, and we are, therefore, a little tired of these strictures on the choirs got up to learn certain pieces, dispersing immediately afterwards; on fragmentary performances, and the rest of the black things on Mr. Curwen's list. It is evident that Mr. Curwen is entirely without knowledge of the best Lancashire choirs formed by the influence of competition in their own neighbourhood. These choirs have as strong a principle of cohesion as any in the world. Their repertory is exceedingly wide. Their organisers show immense enterprise in unearthing the treasures of the old English and Italian madrigal writers and of the finest modern part-song writers. Let Mr. Curwen go to Morecambe next spring; his ideas on the subject of musical competition will be pretty thoroughly revolutionised.' Yes, Mr. Johnstone was open to conviction, sought nothing less than the truth, was at

infinite pains to obtain it—*O si sic omnes*. But the debt we owe to him was not merely because he was a critic keen to discern the good, not merely because he proved a fearless champion. He became a friend always ready to discuss methods of development, and to place his exact and wide knowledge at our disposal, and after we had formed our plans it was a great gain to Mr. Howson and myself to test their wisdom by his opinion. He spoke frequently of the capacity for conducting which the festival revealed, and inveighed against the star system, whether among vocalists, instrumentalists, or conductors—and of these last he had in his mind's eye several whom he maintained we ought to rely upon. It does not fall to me to speak of him as a friend, as a delightful companion, as a courteous gentleman—one whom I married and one whom, alas! I buried in the prime of his powers."

Johnstone took the position he had thus made with increasing seriousness, and worked during the Manchester musical season harder than ever. In the summer he went abroad, but not entirely for rest. He greatly expanded his knowledge, and also his musical reputation and that of his paper, by his visit to festivals at Bayreuth, at Oberammergau, at

Düsseldorf, and at Vienna. Forced to choose, we have hardly been able, within these limits, to quote from the contributions he sent home. The last of his foreign journeys was unlike all the others, which had been taken alone. The words quoted above from the letter of January, 1902, were no longer to be true, though the desired companionship came late. A solitary life in lodgings, and the absence of domestic ties to one of his affectionate and home-loving nature (which lay behind his gipsy habits) could not be compensated even by hosts of friends ; but brighter days were in store. In June, 1902, he became engaged to Miss Lucy Morris, a Manchester lady who had won considerable distinction at Cambridge; and henceforward the most human of interests gave fresh inspiration to his life and work.

Their marriage took place two years later, on June 28th, 1904, quietly at Morecambe. The friend of both, Canon Gorton, married them, and another friend, Mr. Howson, undertook the musical part of the ceremony, which was performed by the Morecambe Madrigal Society and the church choir. There never was a wedding with better music, and for once the hackneyed description, "the service was fully choral," might have been used with a real meaning. The honey-



moon was spent on the Riffel Alp; afterwards the travellers attended the Bayreuth festival, returning to Manchester at the end of August, where they went to live at Tarnhelm (named after the magic helmet of the "Ring") in Victoria Park. A few more months of happiness remained to Johnstone. On Thursday, December 8th, he was taken seriously ill, but though in considerable pain he attended a concert in the evening, and wrote a notice of the performance. The next morning his condition was worse, and on Saturday he was operated upon for appendicitis. But relief came too late, and on Friday, December 16th, his sufferings ended. He had just completed his forty-third year; he was in the plenitude of his intellectual powers, and had entered upon the happiest and most useful period of his life.

This cruel and sudden ending to Johnstone's career, at a moment when he had reason to be reconciled to life and to forgive circumstance, when he was wider in his critical sympathies and more thoroughly master of his means of expression than ever before, and when his public influence was strong, stirred the musical society of north-western England. North and South are two different nations—neighbours that often carefully ignore and misunderstand each other.



This appears to be specially the case in musical criticism. The London press said much too little. But the word "provincial" has no application to the musical energies of Manchester. It is like one of the great German towns, Munich or Frankfurt, being wholly independent of the capital, of which it is not a colony. The mark made by Johnstone in this region was attested in a measure that he would never have foreseen. The *Manchester Guardian*, besides giving an honourable obituary notice to its critic, received far more letters in his honour, expressing sorrow at his early death and admiration of his character, than it found space to print, although the most salient of them filled its columns. They were written with knowledge, not by laymen, but by persons with whom Johnstone had worked and had dealt faithfully, sometimes stringently. The remark of Canon Gorton, "I began my friendship with a quarrel," might be echoed more than once. Johnstone's clean, hard literary thrust, or *punch*, free from noisy hammering violence, was a not infrequent introduction to his acquaintance. It was given with a will, but in a spirit thoroughly, and to third parties amusingly, impersonal. The letters as a whole give a clear notion of the intelligent professional view concerning him;

of his honesty, catholicity, and knowledge. He had been everywhere, he counted, and when he had gone he was missed.

One of Johnstone's brothers in the craft, Mr. Ernest Newman, after referring to a dispute which had led to their friendship, spoke of him as "the best and strongest Englishman of our time in this line." Dr. Adolph Brodsky, after praising in especial Johnstone's accounts of pianoforte performances, singled out his services in breaking down the popular prejudice in England against Bach. Others wrote of his musical erudition and his "laudable desire to prevent anything in the form of charlatanism from finding a place in the musical assemblies of Manchester." Canon Gorton, who, as we quoted above, wrote with gratitude of the high stimulus given by Johnstone to those local efforts which save music from being unduly centralised in the bigger cities, and his pertinent remarks upon the rarity and value of great musical critics claim quotation, as they bring home the public sense of loss in Johnstone's death.

"He held a high view of his office, and would make a sacrifice of self rather than a sacrifice of truth. It is difficult to calculate the extent of your loss. Musicians succeed musicians; they being dead may yet speak.

But the critic's words are ephemeral ; they remain in the files of the newspapers. For musicians there are schools ; but what school is there for critics ? In music we need guides, men with a wide horizon, a general culture, men unfettered by musical faction, with definite ideals, with command of the English tongue, of courage and of true instinct. Such an one, I take it, was Mr. Arthur Johnstone. Who will fill his place ? ”

Upon this precise statement of the case we could not try to improve. We can only add some words upon the nature of the man apart from his profession. In an estimate of Johnstone's character the foremost place must be assigned to his love of truth in all things ; this virtue was the touchstone he applied to his friends and to all artistic work. M. Vantyn happily quotes, as the most appropriate motto for him, Locke's words, “To love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world and the seed-plot of all other virtues,” adding by way of comment, “In everything, in all intercourse, upon all occasions, under all circumstances, whether in enjoyment, in work, in serious intercourse, he was a gentleman in the strictest sense of the word.” Next we may place his wonderful sympathy with the oppressed in every class. Even where

there was much that roused his anger in the sinner, as in the case of Oscar Wilde, he was indignant at the merciless treatment he received, and pleaded for a minor punishment. Where his sympathy could have free play he was tender in the extreme, he would take infinite personal trouble, and give all that his modest means permitted. He was fond of animals, he disliked the idea of killing them in "sport," and was glad that most of his intimate friends shared his view. But he was not unreasonable on this point; and, to take the real test question, he was not absolutely opposed to vivisection under stringent conditions. For all his early talk of the "joy of life" he was more anxious to secure it for others than for himself. He was tolerant under his armour, and would rebuke pointless severity by saying, "Well, well, there is something wrong with almost everybody;" but he did not extend this indulgence to the cruel and pedantic. His youthful rebelliousness, apartness, and questioning of society did not all vanish, but were taken up and transformed into a more flexible temper; for they had never been the mere plant of nihilism and vanity, that a selfish nature manures in its barren private garden. Some of his friends valued, above all, his total lack of the small inquisitiveness, which he resented more

than anything in others. He was deep in his work or in the minor preparations for the day, and did not trouble much about his friends' affairs. But when anything was doing, he emerged at once. When one of his old companions was in suspense over illness at home, and yet could do nothing but wait, Johnstone planned for him and personally conducted an elaborate series of distractions and amusements covering about four hours—not an easy thing to do in Manchester—each of them appearing to be improvised as it came. The trouble over, he relapsed into thought and went his ways. There were many such incidents. A picturesque and noble character of this kind, with its traits of quaintness, claims thus much record, and the more so that reticence made it less easy to discover. To the public the journalist is such a mere spectral hand and pen, writing by lamplight, without a face or form behind it, as we hear of in a certain class of old ghost-stories. Johnstone had become more than this to many of his readers. But they could not know him as a man. It is well, therefore, to lift so much of his privacy as may enable them partially to do so. He went through the world scornful of its common valuations, appraising for himself, watching with a certain isolation, and always



preferring (if he must choose) liberty to happiness, and rightful pride to obvious advantage. But he was all the more human for that.

We may here say something about his piano playing. Johnstone, of course, never professed to be more than an amateur. He was quite aware that the difference in executive skill between the professional and the best amateur is almost as great in music as in billiards ; and that, to paraphrase Matthew Arnold's saying, "Technique is three-fourths of musical performance." As to the remaining fourth his playing stood on a very high level. Even in undergraduate days the charm of his rendering was considerable, always carefully thought out and individual. If he had never heard a piece performed, his insight was remarkable, lighting instinctively upon what one realised was the best way of playing it. His touch was very delicate ; he never forced the tone out of a piano, and always avoided anything that might be called hard hitting. He liked best playing something in the style of a Rubinstein barcarolle, where the music should speak through a veil of sound. But his strength really lay in a fine sense of rhythm, a rare gift even among great pianists. Whatever piece he attempted he took at the proper pace, even if occasionally



a note might be missed or a passage blurred, rather than give a false idea of it by playing too slowly; what was altogether beyond his powers he left alone. On his return from the Cologne Conservatoire his actual execution was at its best, the fingers strong and lissom; and, being at the top of his physical health, his playing was full of almost exuberant vitality. A weak circulation was always a trial, and it was his habit to warm his fingers at a fire, when possible, before sitting down to the piano. It was perhaps a small talent, but singularly dainty and cultivated, for which our memory of twenty-five years is profoundly grateful.

We might expect that the qualities he aimed at in his own playing would be those that most attracted him in the great pianists of his period. Of course he admired at their full value those transcendent players, Rubinstein, Sophie Menter, Paderewski, Rosenthal; but there are also artists equally unapproachable in their own delicate way, such as Pachmann, Godowsky, Reisenauer, Siloti, and it was from them he received the greatest personal pleasure.

As critic his first object was to explain the qualities and scope of the music (in Pater's words, "to disengage its virtue"); to show, if a classic, why it had attained its position,

if modern, why it should command serious attention. He never assumed too much musical knowledge on the part of his readers, avoiding the use of technical expressions, still more of stereotyped phrases. Bad work and slovenly performance he could chastise unsparingly, but he never wrote harshly when he recognised genuine effort, and he was very generous in his praise of young performers, and often attended minor concerts at some inconvenience to encourage rising artists. His style was clear and precise, rather expository in tone; coloured when the occasion demanded, and occasionally enriched with allusions to other arts. Thus the elaborate tracery of Gothic architecture exhibited in Strasburg Cathedral (a favourite figure) is employed to illustrate Bach and contrasted with the formal classicism of earlier composers, and the Palladian style of Handel; Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius" is compared to some "jewelled *ciboire* of the Middle Ages;" a pianist's playing of arabesque passages reminds him of the "arrogance and costly unreason of fine jewellery." His discernment of any new work of permanent value was quick and unerring; we may instance his early estimate of Elgar and indeed of Strauss too (for his position then was uncertain) as having been in advance of

general musical opinion, though unquestioned at the present day. Tchaïkovsky's Pathetic Symphony was a more obvious discovery; here he showed his critical power rather in quenching the popular enthusiasm (which he had at first assisted in creating) for this work when the public seemed to have lost all sense of proportion, by reminding his readers that after all "Tchaïkovsky and Dvorák are inspired barbarians and must not be put on the same level with Beethoven and Schumann." Mention too should be made of his appreciation of Liszt, whose services to music are too frequently ignored—the creator of the modern pianoforte technique, the brilliant and original composer, and the generous friend of Wagner.

In their choice of the articles of which this volume is composed the editors have given special prominence to those on the works of Sir Edward Elgar and Herr Richard Strauss, the two composers of our time who, as Johnstone considered, would bear the largest share in influencing the cause of musical development. Many of the articles were written on the first production of important works, and, in Elgar's case, further impressions are given of later performances of the same work. Those on the great acknowledged masters, if they cannot add much more to our stock of

actual knowledge, are interesting as confessions of a sound musical faith. It is also true that the sum of potential energy in the works of these great masters is infinite ; in this sense, that they strike a new flash out of every fresh and apprehensive mind. They can beget generations of critics, each with another thing to say. Such criticism is not a mere absorptive or passive process ; it is re-creation : it puts into fresh terms, by the art of words, some of the impressions that have been built up of sound without language ; or it tells those who have felt the same thing what they did not clearly know or remember that they had felt. The power to explain music is rarer than competence in judging books. It may be thought that amongst Englishmen of our generation Arthur Johnstone had as large a share as any of this re-creative genius.



# Musical Criticisms





## CHAPTER I.

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### BACH.

#### The Genius of Bach

*November 27,  
1901.*

IN the minds of those who have specially at heart the welfare and progress of musical art in this country nothing at the present time looms larger than the church music of Bach. To acquiesce in the prevalent indifference of the public to that music we feel to be impossible. If Shakespeare is nothing but a bore, there seems to be an end of imaginative literature; and similarly, in music, any person whom Bach entirely fails to interest had better give up all pretence to being musical. For Bach is not one of the composers, like Berlioz, Liszt, Tchaïkovsky, Dvorák, or Richard Strauss, whom it is allowable to like or dislike. Bach is the musical Bible—the foundation of the faith. Historically considered, both Bach and Handel are artists of the Reformation and the Renaissance. But if we fix attention on their essential musical personalities, we find a certain broad difference between the two great eighteenth century composers, which is fairly well suggested by calling Bach a Gothic and Handel a Renaissance artist. Bach's "Passion according to St. Matthew" stands to Handel's "Messiah" in something like

the same kind of contrast that Strasburg Cathedral presents to St. Peter's in Rome. On the other hand, in its course of development music has been quite different from architecture and the graphic and plastic arts, and modern music owes quite a hundred times more to Bach than it does to Handel. Bach represents by far the greatest stimulating influence that has ever existed in the musical world. His stupendous industry, resulting in a body of first-rate work that may be reckoned among the greatest wonders of the world (it is not possible for a modern to know it all); his awe-inspiring union of very great talent with very great character; the completeness of his human nature and the absolute purity of his life and art—these things unite to make of Bach's personality something truly august, something that administers a quietus to the ordinary critical, fault-finding spirit. Glancing over the huge library of his collected works and knowing the glories that a few of them contain, one is fain to say, "There were giants in the earth in those days." Yet "giant" is scarcely the word. For the astounding sinew and sturdiness of the man were quite secondary in the composition of his character to that quality, in virtue of which he worked on throughout a long life as though in perpetual consciousness of something higher than ordinary human judgment; not waiting for full appreciation, which did not come till about a century after his death (very much as in Shakespeare's case), but perfectly realising the great ethical ideal of Marcus Aurelius—the good man producing good works, just as the vine produces grapes. No greater praise can be bestowed on Handel than to

say that in his very best moments he is almost worthy of Bach, as, for example, in the choral section "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," or in the tenor of the recitative "He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man; neither found He any to comfort Him."

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**Bach's  
Mass in B minor**

*November 29,  
1901.*

Under Dr. Richter's irresistible generalship the most arduous task ever yet undertaken by the Hallé Choir was yesterday carried through to a brilliantly successful issue. Bach's great Mass illustrates his tendency to throw all the weightier eloquence of a sacred composition into the chorus, a solo or duet being treated as a delicate interlude, some florid *obbligato* for violin, oboe, or "corno di caccia"—the eighteenth century name for the ordinary orchestral horn—being intertwined with the melodic line in the manner of Gothic tracery. The Mass is in six main divisions—the Kyrie, with three sub-sections; the Gloria and the Credo, each in eight; the Sanctus, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei, each in two sub-sections. The two choruses of the Kyrie—the former a wailing supplication, the latter a mystical counterpart washed clean of earthly passion—were sufficient to show that the choir had a most thorough grasp of their parts, all the difficult and complex chromatic harmonies coming out with admirable clearness and correctness. The first chorus of the Gloria, with its joyous *vivace* movement, breaks into a style much more generally "understood of the people."

Here the choir were on thoroughly firm ground. The ring of the voices was magnificent, and the superbly effective contrast at the words "Et in terra pax" was perfectly given. The first occasion on which we noticed any serious defect in the choral singing was in the burst of jubilant melody at the opening of the "Et resurrexit." The jar was only momentary and was doubtless the result of an over-vehement attack. It can scarcely be questioned that the most marvellous chorus in the whole work is the Sanctus, which expresses in six-part harmony the mystical rapture of celestial beings set free from all care, pain, and strife. The effect of those persistent three-quaver groups in their garlanded similar motion is like nothing else in this world. They create a harmony of unparalleled richness, filling the ear with a feast of ravishing sound. The contrast with such choruses as Handel's "Hallelujah" and "Worthy is the Lamb" is extremely striking. Handel was always of the Church Militant. He was always strenuous, affirming the faith as it were with a note of triumph over its enemies. Such a rose of Paradise as this Sanctus of Bach's is quite remote from all that Handel could do. For an earthly choir, however, with lungs and vocal chords liable to weariness, all this infinitely ornate and elaborate passage-work is very trying, notwithstanding the absolute suavity of the musical expression, and in the ensuing "Hosanna" there were occasional signs of exhaustion. But the choir recovered their breath during the two succeeding solos, and gave a magnificent performance of the concluding "Dona nobis pacem."

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**"St. Matthew  
Passion."**

*January 25th  
1900.*

It is possible to regard the "St. Matthew Passion" of Sebastian Bach as the greatest work of sacred musical art in existence, and thus as greater than Handel's "Messiah"; while at the same time thoroughly acquiescing in the greater popularity of the "Messiah." Handel was a mighty artist and a most lordly person; but he was a man of the world and a Court composer, and his religion, though perfectly genuine, was external and official in character. Bach, too, was a mighty artist, but he was not a man of the world. He was a devout and pious man and a man of the people, and his religion was inward and personal. Again, Handel was cosmopolitan, whereas Bach was thoroughly German. Not that Bach was wanting in knowledge of Italian and other foreign music. He was a perfectly comprehensive encyclopædia of the musical knowledge that existed in his time. But the basis of his character was too homely, simple and loyal to be modified by foreign influence. Thus while Handel became musically an Italian, Bach remained thoroughly German. All these circumstances suggest reasons for the much wider popularity of Handel's music by comparison with Bach's. The general public like the clear and definite outline, the structural simplicity, that they find in the Italian and quasi-antique style of Handel, while they are bewildered by the subtlety, the complexity, the varied imaginative play, and the rejection of set forms that they find in Bach. It must be remembered that the average man of the world to a great extent determines the tone of the general public; one may be thankful



that there exists any work of sacred musical art so splendid as "Messiah," which is to a great extent intelligible to the average man of the world, and one may rest satisfied that, for the present at any rate, the "Messiah" should be performed often, the Passion music seldom.

A long line of Christian aspiration and endeavour culminates in the "St. Matthew Passion" music. The Good Friday service, or mystery, of the Passion dates back to mediæval times. Musical settings of it are quite innumerable. They fall into three main groups, according to style. The earliest are in the "Plain-song" of the mediæval church. At the period of Luther's Reformation the plain song gave way to the chorale style. Finally, there are many settings in the oratorio style. Of these Bach himself certainly wrote four, and probably five. By universal consent the "St. Matthew Passion" is the finest of Bach's settings. The main outlines of the scheme were fixed by tradition. Bach had the assistance of a poet named Picander in arranging his text, but it was by Bach's own judgment that all important points were settled. He divided the story into two parts. The first comprises the conspiracy of the High Priest and Scribes, the anointing of Christ, the institution of the Lord's supper, the prayer on the Mount of Olives and the betrayal of Judas, and ends with the flight of the disciples. In the second part are set forth the hearing before Caiaphas, Peter's denial, the judgment of Pilate, the death of Judas, the progress to Golgotha, the Crucifixion, Death and Burial of Christ. Between the two parts there is a broad contrast, a certain solemn stillness prevailing in the first and a passionate

stir in the second. Fifteen chorales are heard in the course of the work, each forming a meditation upon the foregoing incident in the story. The chorus is double, and there is immense power in the manner in which the two main masses of sound are used, both to emphasise all that has poetic value and to express the many elements composing the mighty picture. Most of the solos are supported by the first choir. The utterances of Christ are given by a bass voice with string quartet accompaniment. The bass voice is in accordance with tradition. Most of the other recitatives have an *obbligato* accompaniment, in which a *motif* bearing figurative reference to some prominent image in the text is worked out. The *obbligato* is in most, though not in all, cases assigned to a wind instrument, so as to contrast still further with the music accompanying the words of Christ. The longest solo part is that of the Narrator, who sings tenor. In the course of a long and masterly discussion Dr. Spitta, the great biographer of Bach, contends that the "St. Matthew Passion" is not, strictly speaking, either dramatic music or oratorio music. One passage in the discussion may here be quoted:—"Consider the passage where the Jewish people, prompted by the High Priests and Elders, demand the release of Barabbas. The Evangelist makes them reply to Pilate's question with the single word 'Barabbas.' The situation is, no doubt, full of emotion, and an oratorio writer might have let the tension of the moment discharge itself in a chorus. But it would necessarily have been embodied in a form in which the chorus could have its full value as a musical factor, in a broadly worked-out com-

position with a text of somewhat greater extent. The dramatic composer would have given it the utmost brevity, since it stands midway in the critical development of an event. He would have to consider the progress of the action as well as the expression of feeling. A sudden roar of the excited populace—thronging tumultuously about the governor—a sudden roar and brief turmoil of voices would be the effect best suited to his purpose. Bach, composing a devotional Passion, makes the whole choir groan out the name 'Barabbas' once only, on the chord of the minor seventh approached by a false close."

Dr. Spitta's point is that Bach's music interprets the feeling of devout Christians, neither subordinating the purport of the text to a musical poem, like a conventional oratorio composer, nor entering into the point of view of the actor, like any other kind of dramatic composer. Dr. Spitta's arguments on this point are quite convincing; and we do not follow his practice of calling the work a "mystery" instead of an oratorio, only because the former word would not be generally intelligible, and because, in this country, we call any work of sacred art for voices and instruments an oratorio, if it is not a Mass, and if it is on too grand a scale to be called a cantata.

### A Minor Concerto

*March 14,  
1902.*

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Anyone who knows his interpretation of Bach's A minor Concerto can scarcely help associating Dr. Brodsky with that work very much as one associates Joachim with Beethoven's, and Sarasate with Mendelssohn's Violin

Concerto. There is no other work that gives us so much of Bach's musical individuality within the scope of a clear, simple, and widely intelligible scheme. Bach made no music for the theatre, the casino, or the fashionable ballroom. He seems to have written almost exclusively for the church and for innocent, paternally safeguarded merry-making. He was a good old patriarch who composed either to praise God or to help the young people enjoy themselves—for if anyone imagines that Bach's gigue, gavotte, sarabande, and so forth were not meant for actual dancing he is greatly mistaken. In such works as the Concertos one may still trace the twofold impulse clearly enough, though all is idealised, structurally elaborated, and otherwise adapted to a purely artistic purpose. For in the first movement of the A minor Concerto—Dr. Brodsky's special piece—we have something that brings the spirit into the proper atmosphere. Bach takes us, as it were, to church, composing our minds, as we go, with strong and able talk about subjects appropriate to the religious season and the service that we are to attend. The second movement is the service, and the Finale is the afternoon walk or dance; Bach would probably have approved of Sunday dancing. Dr. Brodsky is unsurpassable in the andante, where the powerful, composed, and majestic rhythm of the bass finds a poetic and delicately fanciful commentary in the solo part. Here one perceives the difference between Bach's and Beethoven's religious standpoint, between the ages of faith and of strife, between the *ancien régime* and the revolutionary period. For Bach the ancient faith is enough, while in the spirit of

Beethoven there ferment, fume and rage the ideas of the French Revolution. The Hellmesberger cadenza played by Dr. Brodsky in the Finale is perhaps the best-written excursus of its kind in existence. It passes in review the thematic material of the entire work, with unfailing felicity of touch, and good judgment as to the amount of development; and the extremely rich and florid figuration is all so neatly spun out of elements contained in the body of the work, that it seems to have grown where we find it hanging, and has no suggestion of anything alien about it.

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## CHAPTER II.

## BEETHOVEN.

C Minor Sym-  
phony, No. 5

October 22,  
1897.

THE opening of the first movement forms the subject of a celebrated passage in Wagner's pamphlet on conducting, where he complains of the manner in which the pauses on E flat and D used to be scamped, and of many other defects which were usual in the performances of forty years ago. He represents Beethoven rising from his grave and apostrophising the conductor with a harangue that begins: "Hold thou my *fermate* [pauses] long and terribly." Wagner was a most exacting critic, but we venture to think that he would have been fairly satisfied with last night's rendering of the first movement. The contrast of the masculine and feminine elements which are inherent in the first and second subjects respectively was presented with all possible effect; the pauses were as long and terrible as Wagner could have desired, and were sustained with a perfectly equable tone-delivery; the beautiful unaccompanied phrase for oboe—which on the recurrence of the passage takes the place of the *fermata*, or pause, at the twenty-first measure—was given with all possible force of expression; and many



other individual beauties of the rendering might be cited. The second movement is less taxing for the performers than the rest of the work; it was given in a manner well in keeping with the spirit of the symphony, which is like some vast work of sculpture in bronze, such as the gates of the Baptistery at Florence. Just such plastic force in the moulding of mighty tone-elements and just such nobility of the imagination did Beethoven possess as enabled Ghiberti to mould those wonderful gates, concerning which Michelangelo said that they were worthy to be the gates of Paradise. The scherzo, too, was an artistic triumph for the orchestra. Not a point was missed in that wonderful and uncanny tone-picture. A dance of demons it has been called; but it must be remembered that many great artists have treated grotesque and grisly subjects with an ineffably beautiful touch, such as we see, for example, in Alfred Rethel's marvellous drawing "Death the Friend." Not that the scherzo in Beethoven's C minor symphony breathes the spirit of that drawing, which is restful and serene, while the scherzo is full of weird mockery. The only point of the comparison is that in both works we find a grotesque subject ennobled and beautified by a great artistic imagination. Strange that the C minor symphony should often have been quoted as an irregular and anarchical composition. Sir George Grove has pointed out in his well-known analysis that the entire work conforms most strictly to structural principles, and that its chief irregularities are the linking together of the scherzo and finale and the *reprise* of the scherzo shortly before the concluding presto.

**The Sixth  
Symphony**

*February 24,  
1899.*

In dealing with this symphony, the conductor had occasion to show qualities different from those that have been called forth by the preceding works of the present Beethoven series. The third and fifth symphonies are of a strongly exciting character, the second is also distinctly exciting, at any rate in the finale, the fourth is a kind of mildly celestial or seraphic utterance, and the first does not truly represent the mature master in any of his moods. In previous performances of the series it was the successful rendering of some exciting element in the music, or the interpretation of a sublime emotion, upon which the conductor seemed to lay a kind of stress. Yesterday the case was quite different. The Pastoral Symphony is not exciting, or sublime, or mysterious, those qualities being alien to the genius of pastoral music or poetry. It is an expression of the emotion stirred by simple and homely delights; and for its interpretation it requires, in addition to the technical equipment, only a certain fresh and healthy energy. Even the religious note near the end is of a simple idyllic character. Once more the interpretation was, in our view, very admirable. The conductor seemed fully to grasp the poetic import of each section, and, under his guidance, the orchestra fully conveyed the breezy delights of the opening movement, the soothing murmur of the brook, the boisterous mirth of the ensuing allegro, the contrasting note of the storm, and the final hymn of thanksgiving. It has been said that Beethoven's music has an ethical bearing; and, as many persons have great difficulty in under-

standing how any music can have an ethical bearing, it may be worth while to suggest that the Pastoral Symphony, following the tremendous emotions of the preceding symphonies, teaches precisely the same lesson as the opening of Goethe's "Faustus and Helena," where the sylphs, typifying simple, untroubled natural influences, are busied about the person of the sleeping "Faust," pitying the "unhappy man whether good or wicked," and seeking to soothe his tormented spirit. According to the view of Goethe and Beethoven there is no other healing for the unhappy man's tormented spirit but in the simple, untroubled influences of nature. Such, in addition to its musical beauties, is the ethical lesson of the Pastoral Symphony.

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### The Seventh Symphony

*March 3,  
1899.*

One quality differentiating Beethoven's Seventh Symphony from the rest of the nine is well expressed by Sir George Grove in his famous book ("Beethoven and his Nine Symphonies") when he calls it the most rhythmical of them all. Beyond question the rhythm is on the whole more strongly marked in the seventh than in any of the others. The slow movement is not called a march; yet it has a far more definite tramping rhythm than the movement that is called a march in the Heroic Symphony. In the finale the rhythmical emphasis attains a degree of reckless violence that has never been surpassed by any composer except Tchaïkovsky. A scherzo is always strongly rhythmical; but in the scherzo of this symphony

one finds a kind of frenzied rushing, whirling movement that is rare in Beethoven's works. Another differentiating quality of the symphony is grotesque expression, which is strong in the vivace, stronger in the scherzo, and goes all lengths in the finale. As with the later works of many other great artists, it is hard to divine the poetic intention of this symphony. One perceives a marvellous design, for the most part grotesque in character; one perceives the work of a gigantic imagination, smelting the stubborn tone-masses as in a furnace and moulding them to its purposes with a kind of superhuman plastic force. But what the mighty design illustrates is not, at present, obvious. The grotesqueness of the first, third, and last movements is all the more striking from the character of the slow movement, which is absolutely remote from the grotesque. The quality of the expression in that slow movement eludes all classification. It is not exactly a funeral march, and not exactly a dirge, though it is undoubtedly mournful in character. A kind of unearthly rhythmical chant one might imagine it to be, accompanying some mysterious function among the gods of the dead. There is perhaps no slow movement left by Beethoven the beauty of which is more penetrating or more imposing. After a fine and spirited rendering of the introduction and vivace, the slow movement—inscribed “allegretto” in the score, though the composer afterwards expressed a desire that the indication should be changed to “andante quasi allegretto”—was played with fine expression, though perhaps a trifle too quickly. The scherzo was entirely admirable. At the opening of the finale the rushing

semiquavers in the violin part were, for some reason, not quite clear, though later in the movement, when the music had become more complex, the same figure sounded clear enough. On the whole, the rendering of the symphony well maintained the success that had previously attended the series.

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**"Eroica"**

**Symphony**

*February 1,*

*1900.*

The fact that the leading theme in the first movement of the "Eroica" Symphony is taken note for note from Mozart's youthful operetta, "Bastien et Bastienne," is of no great importance. If an operetta contained something that could thus be caught up into the seventh heaven of art, its existence was thereby justified very much better than the existence of most other operettas. The notion of bringing a charge of plagiarism against Beethoven in reference to this theme is absurd beyond expression. There is, after all, nothing in the theme but a certain rhythmical arrangement of the common chord so simple that it might well have occurred to two composers independently. Whether it occurred independently to Beethoven or whether he heard Mozart's operetta at the Elector's Theatre in Bonn while he was a boy and unconsciously reproduced the theme, as is conjectured by Sir George Grove, is of no importance. With Mozart the theme is little more than a piece of chance passage-work. It leads to nothing; whereas with Beethoven it leads to developments of extraordinary richness and significance, forming the most important



element in a tone-picture that greatly surpasses in passionate and incisive eloquence, in fulness of matter, varied interest, and plastic force anything that previously existed in the world of music. It would be hard to mention any other of Beethoven's themes from which results quite so tremendous have been obtained. It is repeated between thirty and forty times in the course of the movement, reappearing under an endless variety of forms, assigned to all sorts of different instruments, changing in key, in tone-colouring, in loudness or softness of utterance, producing an infinite variety of effects in the harmony, combining in all sorts of unexpected ways with other themes, and on every reappearance taking on new value, bringing fresh revelation. To such great uses may an operetta tune come at last, if it happen to be laid hold of by a Beethoven with an imagination like a mighty smelting furnace, and a hand that can model like a great sculptor in bronze. In Dr. Richter's interpretation of the "Eroica," the most striking point is his treatment of the contrast between those musical elements symbolising phases of virile energy and the strains of consolation and reconciliation. Of the latter element a characteristic example is the heavenly duet for oboe and 'cello that occurs just after the terrific outburst of rage and defiance in the "working-out" section of the first movement. It is a crisis of beauty and grandeur to which, so far as we know, no other conductor can now do justice. But here, and throughout the mighty first movement, we were reminded that Dr. Richter's pre-eminence is really more unquestionable in Beethoven than in any other music. His Wagner renderings are approached



by others, but his Beethoven renderings are not even approached. To the noble and solemn strains of the Funeral March again complete justice was done; and the same may be said of the scherzo—a movement full of radiant mirth and containing in the trio the most beautiful horn music ever written—and of the finale in variation form.

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**Symphony  
No. 2 in D**

*January 15,  
1904.*

According to Mr. Felix Weingartner, the advance from Beethoven's No. 2 to his No. 3 Symphony is so great as to be without parallel in the history of art, and this we regard as sound doctrine. The No. 3—the "Eroica"—represents not merely a contribution of unparalleled brilliancy to the symphonic music of the period, but an immense enlargement of its previously known possibilities. Such a work naturally dwarfs all that has gone before in its own kind; but it is very desirable to avoid the mistake of certain commentators who, perceiving a great gulf between No. 2 and No. 3, declare the former to be an immature work, not thoroughly characteristic of Beethoven, but exhibiting him as a mere disciple of Haydn and Mozart. While listening yesterday to the wonderfully animated and expressive rendering one could scarcely fail to be struck by the fact that it is all intensely Beethovenish; that it goes beyond Mozart, quite as distinctly and persistently as Mozart in his superb G minor Symphony goes beyond Haydn. We need a revision of the current view in regard

to these early Beethoven Symphonies. Only the first is immature. No. 2 is stamped with the true Beethoven individuality on every page, and is comparable with Mozart's G minor in the richness of its organisation and the potency of its charm. The enormous difference between No. 2 and No. 3 is not to be correctly indicated by calling the former immature. It is a difference that separates the Beethoven Symphonies from No. 2 to the end into two well-defined groups. As was long ago observed, the odd-number Symphonies, beginning with 3, are cast more or less in the heroic mould, while the intervening even-number Symphonies are much milder in character—creations of halcyon periods in which the composer would seem to have been storing up energy for the titanic labours of 3, 5, 7, and 9. Bearing this in mind, we have no difficulty in assigning No. 2 to its proper place. It is to be grouped along with 4, 6, and 8, and it may thus be called the first of the "halcyon" Symphonies. Besides the general character of the music there is one very special reason for not accepting the view of No. 2 as an immature work. In the second subject of the *Larghetto*, we have a very beautiful and original musical idea, so thoroughly recognised by the composer as one of his best and most characteristic that he returned to it many years later when composing his last and greatest slow movement. Compare pp. 29 and 363 of Sir George Grove's "Beethoven and his Nine Symphonies," noticing in particular that the key-relation of the syncopated theme to the general scheme of the movement is the same in the two cases.

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**"Missa  
Solennis"**

*February 1,  
1901.*

Until yesterday Beethoven's "Missa Solennis" had not been heard at these concerts, but it is not surprising that performances of such a work should be few and far between. It is, beyond question, the most austere of all musical works—a product of Beethoven's quite inexorable mood. At the period when it was written the composer had become a sort of suffering Prometheus. Even apart from his deafness, it is wonderful that Beethoven's persistent ill-fortune, his isolated and unhappy life, should not have discouraged him and checked the flow of his creative energy. But that the mightiest of his compositions should have been produced when he was stone-deaf—that is surely one of the most perfectly amazing among well-authenticated facts! So far as we know, there never was any other case in which deafness failed to cut a person off altogether from the world of music. With Beethoven it only brought a gradual change of style. As the charm that music has for the ear faded away he became more and more absorbed, aloof, austere, and spiritual. The warm human feeling of his middle-period compositions gave way to a style of such unearthly grandeur and sublimity as are oppressive to ordinary mortals. Of that unearthly grandeur there is no more typical example than the "Missa Solennis." Not only in regard to the composition but even in regard to a performance the ordinary language of criticism is at fault. Who ever heard a "satisfactory" performance of the "Missa Solennis"? A spirit of sacrifice is demanded of the performers; for the music is written from

beginning to end with an utter want of consideration for the weaknesses and limitations of the human voice. Of course that would be intolerable in an ordinary composer. Handel's combination of German structural solidity with Italian courtesy, sense of style, and delight in rich vocal rhetoric is the ideal thing. By comparison with the reasonable and tactful Handel, Beethoven is a kind of monster, from the singer's point of view, but a monster of such genius that his terrible requirements must occasionally be met.

The quartet was best in the astonishing "Dona nobis pacem" section, where the composer seems to represent humanity as endeavouring to take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence, protesting against all the oppression that is done under the sun, and sending up to the throne of God so instant a clamour for the gift of peace as may be heard amid the very din of strife. For that prayer for peace sounds against the sullen rolling of drums and menacing clangour of trumpets, the voices having now a mighty unanimity, now the wail of this or that forlorn victim. One looks in vain through the temple of musical art for anything to match that tremendous conception marking the final phase of the "Missa Solennis."

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"Fidelio."

*October 28,  
1904.*

A most strange and unclassifiable chamber in the palace of musical art is reserved for Beethoven's "Fidelio." A sort of despair is likely to come over one who attempts to state how Beethoven stands in relation to dramatic music. If one says that he was not a great dramatic composer,

there arise the questions—Did he not make the Symphony a hundred times more dramatic than it ever was before? Did he not make music in association with Goethe's "Egmont" that seems to belong for evermore to that drama? Did he not individualise Leonora in music as well as Mozart had individualised the much less exalted characters of Donna Anna and Zerlina? Did he not achieve in his "Third Leonora" something that no one has ever equalled or can ever hope to equal in the domain of the dramatic overture? In fact he did all those things, and several more that can be cited in apparent refutation of the statement that he was not a great dramatic composer. And yet it is certain that he never composed dramatic music as one to the manner born—not with the unfailing adequateness to the theme of Gluck, the felicitous profusion of Mozart, the glowing picturesqueness of Weber. No; in the mighty river of Beethoven the symphonist's invention shrinks to a trickle in his one opera. The water is incomparably limpid, and blossoms of the rarest beauty and fragrance grow on the banks of the stream; but every page is stamped, as it were, with the admission that writing operas was not Beethoven's strong point; and beyond question he acted wisely in writing only one. How mighty is the change when he takes the symbols of his one musical drama and uses them for a monumental purpose, in the great "Leonora" Overture! Beethoven is Shakespearean in the range of his mind and in his attitude towards life, which he always approaches on the purely human side, and without the pre-occupations of the Court, the camp, the cloister,



the academic grove, or the church. But he is not Shakespearean in his medium of expression, which is hard and unyielding—a kind of musical bronze or granite. Yet “Fidelio”—despite its jejune story, which suggests that Beethoven, having objected to Mozart’s “Don Giovanni” as scandalous, felt it his duty to compose an opera on a subject that should be “strictly proper,” and despite its thin vein of invention—inevitably retains its hold on the musical world. To call the success of it a *succès d’estime* would be a misuse of words. It focuses a certain range of poetic ideas that nothing else of its kind touches, and stands—with its Wordsworthian simplicity and moral goodness—among other operas like a Sister Clare amid a group of fine ladies.

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## CHAPTER III.

## BERLIOZ.

**"Symphonie  
Fantastique."**

*November 1,  
1901.*

THE "Symphonie Fantastique" offers a more complete picture of the composer's musical personality than any other single work. As a specimen of youthful precocity it also stands alone. It was written at the age of twenty-six, when the composer was still a student at the Conservatoire, being persistently snubbed by a group of dons, who all—with the possible exception of Cherubini, the Principal—were utterly his inferiors in every kind of musical power, knowledge, and skill. The experience of Berlioz at the Conservatoire of Paris was very similar to Verdi's at a like institution in Milan; but the marks of genius in work of the student period were far more distinct in Berlioz's than in Verdi's case. We have said that, as a work of precocious genius, the "Symphonie Fantastique" stands alone. No doubt other composers, such as Mozart and Schubert, had shown genius of a higher order at an even earlier age. But the "Symphonie Fantastique," as the work of a 'prentice-hand showing absolute mastery of the greatest and most complex resources, has no parallel. The great fact that has always to be

remembered in regard to Berlioz is that he devoted himself with all the energy of an enormous and highly original talent to one particular task in music. That task was the winning of new material for the musical medium, and what Berlioz accomplished in the world of tone was very like what Christopher Columbus accomplished in the world of land and sea. Berlioz too opened up a new hemisphere, and he did his work much more thoroughly than the great navigator. This mighty achievement secures for Berlioz a permanent place of the first importance in the musical hierarchy. But to be deterred by respect for his genius from admitting his faults is not the best way of using his magnificent legacy. Those faults are none the less monstrous for being inseparable from his individuality, and a thoroughly enlightened modern musician would probably find it very difficult to define the attitude of his mind towards the works of Berlioz's art. In a sense, everything in the best of those works, among which the symphony played yesterday is unquestionably to be reckoned, is justified. When one finds an artist dealing with certain subjects as though to the manner born, and with enormous power and resource, one must not condemn him because those subjects are unpleasant or even horrible in the extreme. Such condemnation is not living and letting live. Artistic power is associated with qualities of the highest and rarest that human nature produces, and it is always justified. The favourite subjects of Berlioz may well prove a stumbling-block. "Orgy" very nearly became in his hands a musical form. In at least three different works of his—"Symphonie Fantastique," "Harold in Italy," and "The

Damnation of Faust"—we find a movement called by some such name, and, his appetite for horrors not being satisfied with the "Witches' Sabbath" in the first of those three works, he gives us another movement representing a procession to the guillotine of a young man condemned for murdering his sweetheart. In close association with this love of the lurid, spectral, and ghastly is the bitterly ironical spirit which conceived an "Amen" chorus in mock ecclesiastical style to be sung over a dead rat, the guying of the composer's own love-theme with a jig-like variation on a specially ugly instrument (the E flat clarinet) introduced into the orchestra for that purpose, and the use of the stern and majestic Plain Song theme of the "Dies Iræ" as a *cantus firmus*, to which the mocking laughter of witches (rushing past through the air in a huge weltering broom-stick cavalcade) makes a kind of fantastic counterpoint. It is well to bear in mind that the same talent gave us such miraculous gossamer fancies as the "Queen Mab" Scherzo and the chorus of Sylphs and that most tenderly beautiful and vividly conceived idyll "L'Enfance du Christ."

For the "Symphonie Fantastique" the orchestra had to be considerably enlarged. In addition to all the usual instruments the score requires an E flat clarinet, two bells (G and C), a second harp, an extra kettledrum, and a second bass tuba. Everything had been rehearsed with infinite care, and in all five movements the rendering was a display of virtuosity such as only a very rare combination of favourable circumstances would allow one to hear. No other composer displays a

very powerful and skilful orchestra to quite such immense advantage. As Mr. Edward Dannreuther has finely and truly remarked—"With Berlioz the equation between a particular phrase and a particular instrument is invariably perfect." His violently wilful character manifests itself in the harmony. His fancies devour one another, like dragons of the prime, instead of progressing and developing in an orderly manner. But the marvellous beauty of the tone-colouring and aptness of the passage-work never fail. The parts of the symphony most thoroughly enjoyed by the audience were, no doubt, the second movement in waltz rhythm (where the most wonderful use is made of the two harps and the wood-wind) and the march in the fourth movement, where the part symbolising the emotions of the mob rather than of the victim is very brilliant and telling, with suggestions of that Hungarian March which the composer afterwards made his own.

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"Faust."

March 7,  
1902.

No more original or more enigmatic figure than Hector Berlioz was produced during the nineteenth century by the world of art—a word that may here be understood in its widest acceptation, and thus as including architectural, musical, graphic, plastic, and literary art. In one of the earliest *critiques* on his "Faust," which was first performed at the Opéra Comique in Paris in 1846, the opinion was expressed that he ought to have been a chemist, not a musician—a remark that gives extraordinary point to a piece of advice

that Berlioz once gave to artists in general: "Always collect the stones that are thrown at you; they may help to build your monument." The remark that Berlioz ought to have been a chemist, originally intended as a sneer, is a perfect case in point. He *was* a chemist, and it is his chief glory to have been that in the world of music. He tested, analysed, combined anew, and prodigiously enriched those elements of tone which are the material of the musical artist. Of course he was far more than chemist. He was also explorer, but always in search of material for his essentially chemical experiments in tone. One can scarcely wonder that "Faust" was a failure at first. Amongst the happy-go-lucky patchwork of the book is much evidence of that coarse and satirical vein which was so strong in the composer. How could the public be expected to approve of an opera on the subject of Faust that had no love-song or truly lyrical utterance of any kind for the tenor hero, but, on the other hand, had a song about a flea and a rat's requiem, ending with an "Amen" chorus in mock ecclesiastical style, to say nothing of a scene in Pandemonium and an *orgie infernale*? Berlioz was a sort of a belated mediæval. The very title, "Damnation de Faust," is mediæval. Shakespeare and the other poets of Renaissance and later times recognise the fate of a soul as a matter *sub judice* till the end of the world. But Berlioz had no more scruple than Dante in anticipating the Last Judgment. Mediæval, too, is the coarseness of the scene in Auerbach's cellar; and the *chanson gothique*, about the King of Thule, sounds as if it had come to the composer as a reminiscence from some previous



state of existence, so marvellous is the power of the quaint and weird melody to transport the spirit back to a musty and hierarchic world with walled towns and narrow streets, with terrorism and torture-chambers, with crusades and knight-errantry, with impossible heights of holiness and unimaginable depths of diabolism. But not to any of the defects or qualities rooted in the composer's mediævalism must we look for the popularity which the work acquired in this country some thirty-four years after the original production in Paris and has retained ever since. What the general public enjoys is the superb peasants' chorus near the beginning, the arrangement of the Ráoczy March, which is the finest piece of military music in existence, the chorus and dance of sylphs, Margaret's Romance, and Mephistopheles' Serenade. Perhaps, too, a good many of them take a sort of unregenerate pleasure in the rat and flea songs, while at heart disapproving of such things, and of course they like the ballad of the King of Thule, because no one who is musical at all can entirely fail to perceive the charm of that wonderful melody. It appeals to plenty of listeners who have no idea that there is anything Gothic or mediæval about it.

### The Centenary Celebrations

*December 10,  
1903.*

Berlioz was the Columbus of music; he discovered the New World. By his theory and practice of orchestration he so greatly enlarged and enriched the resources of tone that all contemporary and subsequent composers capable of understanding his message experienced an



immense exhilaration—a sense that new and hitherto undreamed-of possibilities were opening out before them. The starting-point of his momentous voyages was the idea of what is called “programme music.” Like Wagner, he perceived that after Beethoven symphonic music could do no more on the old lines, but that music might learn to characterise much more sharply than it had ever done before. His prodigious reform, enlargement, and enrichment of orchestration was entirely carried out under the influence of the desire for stronger and finer characterisation, for a more varied and interesting play of emotion and graphic suggestion. A good many musicians and music-lovers at the present day, recognising the enormous merit of Berlioz’s achievement in orchestration, yet consider that, like Moses, he was not allowed to enter the promised land to which he had led his people; or, more literally, that Berlioz was not able to make really good use of his own discoveries, the importance of which is to be recognised in the music of Wagner, Dvorák, Tchaïkovsky, and others who learned from Berlioz, rather than in his own music. While admitting that later men, such as those mentioned, have used the Berlioz instrument to a more spiritual kind of purpose or with greater epic and dramatic significance, the open-minded music-lover can scarcely deny that the compositions of Berlioz, considered as absolute works of art, include a majestic array of masterpieces. Such things as the “Te Deum” and “Messe des Morts” bear, in their unparalleled vastness of conception, the stamp of an imagination comparable only to Michel Angelo’s. They are mighty fragments of

larger works never carried out—impossible to be carried out. The best-known work by Berlioz—and the most perfect, on the whole, of the extended works—is the “Faust,” which must not be judged as an operatic version of Goethe’s “Faust,” but rather as a musical setting of the “Faust” story in the racy and drastic manner of the mediæval puppet plays, Goethe’s drama being only used in so far as it affords suggestions for scenes of the well-salted and drastic animation that Berlioz loved. Berlioz was a typical French Romantic. His music is absolutely wanting in the ethical element that is so strong in Bach and Beethoven. But he had a powerful and truly poetic sense of the wonderful, the beautiful, the weird, and the characteristic. Over and over again in his “Faust” he achieves typical excellence. That rapture of spring which is one of the great, imperishable poetic themes has nowhere in music been better rendered than in the first pages of “Faust” (orchestra and tenor voice), and the ensuing peasant choruses are by far the best musical expression of that “sunburnt mirth” which outside the world of art is only possible under a southern sky. The Rákoczy March as orchestrated by Berlioz is not only the finest piece of military music in the world but is an immeasurably long way ahead of the next best piece. The energy, gaiety, and tumultuous eloquence of the final section (altogether Berlioz’s own, of course), give us the musical symbol of “La Gloire”—that important conception which has played a part in history for three centuries. The scene on the banks of the Elbe is woven of moonbeams and gossamer fancies that no other composer could

have handled. The rhythm of the Mephisto serenade is too good for this world. Here the composer succeeds in expressing the diabolical without any direct suggestion of malice—simply by creating the rhythm and accent of laughter too monstrously whole-hearted and full-blooded for a mere man. Another miracle is the “Chanson Gothique” (about the King of Thule), which is, as it were, the distilled essence of all mediæval romances about love-sick maidens looking forth from their casements. In the latter part the composer falls a victim to his evil genius—the *macabre*,—and the terrible squint of the madman is perceptible in the “Ride to the Abyss” and the howling and gibbering of demons, which entirely lack the significance of the demons in “Gerontius,” and simply show us the composer indulging his taste for the grotesque horrors of the old miracle plays. The latter part of the composition should not be taken too seriously. Even in the early part there is one example of the composer’s peculiar fondness for guying the offices of religion. But this, too, should be lightly passed over and forgiven in consideration of the feast that the work as a whole offers to the imagination and the bracing salt wind of the composer’s manly and affirmative genius.

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## CHAPTER IV.

## LISZT.

**"Faust"  
Symphony**

*November 21,  
1902.*

THE melancholy fact has to be recorded that the "Faust" Symphony fell flat on its first performance in Manchester. There seems to be something in our national temperament which makes it peculiarly difficult for us to penetrate the secret of Liszt and learn to understand his tone-language. In musical society on the Continent "not to like Liszt" is regarded as a fixed characteristic of the Englishman, and those few Englishmen who have learned to like Liszt remember the gradual process by which their ears were opened, like the learning of a foreign language after one is grown up. Some composers have a manner of utterance that may be picked up half unconsciously; but for Britons, at any rate, Liszt's is not of that kind. Patience, persistent study, reflection, observation, comparison, besides an ear of some subtlety, are necessary for the understanding of it, and we have not the habit of taking music seriously (except in the abstract) or of giving it our whole attention. So a thing like the "Faust" Symphony goes over our heads as if it were a poem in some foreign language of which

we only apprehend the rhythm. It is a pity, for to those few who understand the poem is very great and splendid. Like some ghostly Ancient Mariner, the spirit of the master holds us "with his glittering eye," and speaks as one who is full of matter and wisdom and is a master of life. His story is that old one about Faust and Gretchen—not the Berlioz version ending with the Damnation of Faust, but the original Goethe version which deals with the working out of Faust's salvation (the difference between the two being really quite considerable),—and in the telling of this story he conveys lessons to the heart that are much too delicate for words. A good many composers have made "Faust" music of one kind or another. Spohr and Schumann, Berlioz and Boïto, Wagner and Liszt, all paid their tribute to the inexhaustible interest of the theme, besides Gounod—most superficial and consequently best known of them all. Even in Gounod, however, there is a little genuine "Faust" music—a very little. It is to be found in the first few bars of the overture, in the Mephistopheles Serenade, and, perhaps one might add, in the song about the King of Thule, though Berlioz did that much better. Wagner's "Faust" Overture is quite a great composition, and it is nearest akin to Liszt's Symphony. But it is much too one-sided to vie in interest with Liszt's tremendous composition, which seems to grasp the whole subject and tear the very heart out of it, with a kind of imaginative power suggesting Victor Hugo's, though the touch is more true. He begins with the solitary Faust in his study, plunged in gloomy meditation, every phase of which the music expounds (to him who listens



closely enough)—intellectual pride, reduced to impotence in the endeavour to solve the “riddle of the painful earth”; the tranquillising of the spirit by mystical influences seeming to emanate from a higher world; then the reawakening of pain in the consciousness that had been hushed and charmed. Here the music, passing up the chord with each note preceded by the semitone above, sounds like a series of broken sighs. And presently we encounter something quite new. A plaintive theme on the clarinet, answered by a single viola, symbolises the vision of feminine companionship. Hope reawakens, and the strength of Faust’s nature asserts itself in the splendid E major theme for full orchestra, destined to play the leading part throughout the work. The movement is long, thoughtful, and no less apt in invention than rich and glowing in tone-colour. In the second movement, headed “Gretchen,” we encounter quite a different atmosphere. It is a worthy counterpart to the Gretchen episode in Goethe’s poem—no doubt the best picture of a girl, from the man’s point of view, that exists in literature. Inexpressibly beautiful is the contrast between the fancy-free and the loving Gretchen. There is nothing in all music more rich and rapturous than the ensuing love-scene, which reminds one of the point in the first act of “Die Walküre” where the doors swing open and reveals to the enchanted gaze of the lovers the spring landscape bathed in moonlight. But Liszt is here more to the point than Wagner. Then comes Mephisto with his diabolical dance, turning everything into derision, till a light shines down from heaven, where the soul of Margaret appears among the angels, and the “spirit that



denies," with his mask torn off, shrinks away, trembling and baffled. Here the "chorus mysticus" gives utterance to the crowning idea of the "Faust" drama—"The woman-soul draweth us upward and on." Such a work as the "Faust" Symphony departs from the classical model inasmuch as it is unified altogether by dramatic and characteristic and not at all by architectural principles. It may also be regarded as three character-sketches, which, with the help of some cross-reference, together tell a story. Any person well versed in modern music, on hearing this composition for the first time, cannot but be astonished at the number of ideas, afterwards used by other composers, that it contains. The most glaring case is the transformation music just before the entry of the "chorus mysticus," which has been conveyed bodily by Wagner, with only quite unimportant changes, into the third act of "Die Walküre," after the words—"So streif' ich dir die Gottheit ab." But dozens of other ideas in Wagner's "Tristan" and "Siegfried" and Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel" one here finds in embryo.

### Pianoforte Concerto in E Flat

*November 13,  
1903.*

The attitude of the musical public in this country towards Liszt is at the present day the most unsatisfactory and anomalous feature of the musical situation. It is not possible to name any individual who has done more than Liszt towards creating all that is best in the modern musical world. He created the pianoforte technique with-

out which the later works of Beethoven could never have been performed, he inaugurated a new era of symphonic music by his invention of the Symphonic Poem, and he was the first to understand and interpret Wagner. But we persist in making our historic and traditional mistake. We do not appreciate the continuity of musical art, and we do not value the stimulating and school-forming influences. It is the same now as a hundred and fifty years ago, when we preferred Handel, who never influenced any other composer to good purpose, and who essentially represented the end of a development, to Bach, who is the greatest and most fruitful formative influence of any musical age, and who has powerfully influenced all subsequent composers of genius, except two or three of the Latin races. In the early nineteenth century we made precisely the same mistake in regard to Mendelssohn and Schumann; now we are making it once more by preferring Tchaïkovsky to Strauss. But worse still is our mistake of refusing to listen to Liszt, without whom neither Tchaïkovsky nor Strauss could have existed as musical personages. Once more yesterday the superb Liszt Concerto in E flat was played and received with a kind of tolerance. Very fine playing, the audience seemed to think; but what a pity the composition was not something worth hearing! Yet it is quite the most brilliant and entertaining of Concertos. No person genuinely fond of music was ever known to approach it with an unprejudiced mind and not like it, and—what is more remarkable—the effect of the music on all those who study it with a view to playing it is so great that it invariably overcomes the ancient and

deeply-rooted prejudice. But, for the general public, it is not a more notorious fact that Handel's "Messiah" is a great and admirable work than that the original compositions of Liszt are horrible. Consequently, when a work by Liszt is played they do not listen, but resign themselves to be bored; and so even a work like the E flat Concerto, which is quite popular in character and free from anything tormented or obscure, besides being the most brilliant pianoforte Concerto in existence, falls on listless ears and provokes only the half-hearted applause intended exclusively for the soloist.

## CHAPTER V.

## WAGNER.

**"Faust in  
Solitude"**

*February 15,  
1900.*

Musical biography teaches that a hard struggle, not only for recognition but for existence, is the normal experience of a great composer. A few great players and singers make fortunes, but great composers never, and most of them have had to endure stress of poverty to the end of their lives. Yet it may be doubted whether any other great composer ever sounded the depths of human misery, as Wagner did during that first visit to Paris, undertaken in the hope of making his fortune at the Grand Opera. It is generally supposed that genius is conscious of its own powers and works on with serene confidence in the future. But, unfortunately, there is also such a thing as conceit—that is, the illusory consciousness of powers that do not exist; and a man of genius who, without private means, had thrown up his employment and taken himself and his wife a long journey to a foreign country in order to win recognition in "la ville Lumière" must, in the course of three fruitless years, have felt something worse than misgiving. That Wagner did so feel is a matter not of speculation but of history. He has described

how, when meditating the subject of the "Flying Dutchman," he sent for a pianoforte to see whether, after the mean drudgery and abject misery of those years, "he was still a musician." Wagner was not an ordinary man. Everything about him was on a grander scale—his folly and rashness no less than his talent. Though more sensitive than others to the most trifling discomfort, he showed, under an accumulation of miseries that would simply have crushed almost anyone else, a stupendous energy and reaction. He had failed to get his "Rienzi" performed in Paris. For three years he had continued his fruitless endeavours to obtain a hearing at the opera; and a crisis of frightful despondency ensued, when, to ruin and beggary and the sense of having made a fool of himself, was added an attack of a painful skin disease which tormented him at intervals all his life. Now it was precisely at that crisis that he wrote the "Faust" Overture—his masterpiece in the strict sense of the term; that is, the first work of his mastership or mature power. Thus, instead of being crushed, Wagner is suddenly found drawing upon the reserve force of his genius to produce a work that stands very nearly on a level with Beethoven's third "Leonora" Overture. For the Faust Overture is a tone-picture of the utmost energy, nobility, and beauty, utterly defying comparison with any other except Beethoven, and attaining to a kind of demonic eloquence that Wagner himself never found again, till quite late in life, during the "Ring of the Nibelung" period.

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The "Nibelung"  
Dramas.  
May 11,  
1903.

Whatever may have happened in former years, it was scarcely possible to leave the theatre after the "Götterdämmerung" performance on Saturday with any disposition to satirise the management for the failure of the stage effects in the final scene. In the course of the week Wagner's greatest work had been presented with considerably brighter intelligence and more adequate resource than ever before in this country, and it was piteous that there should be a slight humiliation at the end. It may be doubted, indeed, whether the "Ring" in its entirety has ever been better done, for the amazing excellence of the orchestral performance was to some considerable extent matched by the singers, and the dramatic realisation of the composer's intentions was good everywhere except in certain parts of the prologue, and showed positive genius at certain points in each of the main dramas forming the trilogy. The general impression was thus one of a great task nobly carried out, and the concluding fizzle, however tiresome and distressing to the stage managers, could but seem a trifling matter to any appreciative spectator. It is a terrible business, that *finale* of "Götterdämmerung." Conceived in a mood of frenzied protest, it bears a peculiar stamp of extravagance and violence. It shows Wagner as an Anarchist of the Bakounine type, undertaking, as it were, to "grasp this sorry scheme of things entire" and "shatter it to bits" on the off-chance that Nature might afterwards "remould it nearer to the heart's desire." A life-time of noble endeavour and great achievement,



with scarcely any response from the world but the crackling of thorns under a pot, had produced in Wagner such bitterness of spirit as little men are saved from by their natural limitations, and it is that bitterness of spirit which finds expression in the smashing and burning and drowning of the "Götterdämmerung" *finale*. Heroes and demi-gods, renouncing a hopeless conflict with the ugliness and meanness of the world, involve heaven and earth in one red ruin. Such is the significance of a tableau not worth a tithe of the time, trouble, and expense devoted to it.

By engaging Dr. Richter for the 1903 production the Covent Garden authorities made it clear that this time the nonsense of star performers who make cuts for their own convenience and sacrifice the composer's intentions to a performer's conceit would not be tolerated; and at the same time they gave the public the only possible guarantee for adequate rehearsal. For that privilege London has had to wait twenty-seven years since the original production in Bayreuth, though "Die Walküre" and "Siegfried" were long ago taken up into the ordinary Covent Garden repertory. There can be little doubt that "Rhinegold" is in all important respects the most difficult part of the "Ring" to make effective. Epic rather than dramatic in character, it presents to the actor an unfamiliar kind of task. He finds himself representing some creature that is scarcely individualised at all, and taking part in the interplay of elemental forces rather than of human passions. This goes far towards accounting for the fact that last week the "Rhinegold" performance fell very far below the level of all the

rest. The representative of Alberic in the first scene seemed to take very little interest in the love-making with the Rhine maidens. He had apparently adopted the guide-book view of the dwarf as a creature merely of greed and hate, and had overlooked the "fruitful impulse"—to borrow Mr. Bernard Shaw's expression—which drives Alberic towards the Rhine maidens; for his acting was quite feeble and pointless, nor was it possible for him to carry out the stage directions that require Alberic to climb over the rock-work and rush after the Rhine maidens with the "nimbleness of a Cobold," the rock-work being much too insecure and the Rhine maidens too restricted in their movements. In that first scene the rise of the curtain reveals something like the glazed side of a huge aquarium tank, and it was apparently to the general effect of the picture as first displayed that all the attention of the scenic artists had been given. Nibelheim, with the clanking sounds of the Nibelungs at their smiths' work, was fairly well rendered, but here again Alberic's part was ineffectively done, and there was far too much fairy-tale prettiness and variety in the aspect of his crowd of slaves. At Bayreuth these victims of sweating and improper labour conditions are represented with horrifying truth as a huddled crowd of little earth-men, driven hither and thither by the cursing and lashing of their master, and, instead of being to some slight extent adorned and differentiated, uniformly grimy and abject. Stage prettiness was never more out of place than in the Covent Garden presentation of the scene. The setting was best in the final scene, where the Gods march over the rainbow bridge into Valhalla.

In the rainbow there was a curious predominance of "greenery-yallery" tints to the exclusion of the primary colours, but it took its place well enough in a fairly effective stage picture with a prehistoric building on the heights to the left. Here the only point of inferiority to the Bayreuth presentation was in the meteorological background. After the magnificent orchestrated thunderstorm the sky is supposed to clear and the Gods to enter their new abode amid the glow of a most radiant sunset. But the secrets of atmospheric effect and cloud pageantry seem to remain for the present exclusively in the hands of Bayreuth and Munich, and these things, though they belong to the framework rather than the essential drama, seem to have loomed large in Wagner's imagination when he conceived the "Ring," and so to have a certain importance.

## II.

In strong contrast with the embarrassment and falling back on the mere picturesque of the "Rhinegold" presentation was the rendering of "Die Walküre" on Wednesday. A dramatic interpretation of Wagner at all comparable to the musical interpretation which we derive from the Liszt-Bülow-Richter tradition is not for the present, or for some time to come, to be expected. But, making allowance for the difference in standard between the musical and scenic arts, which is simply a phenomenon of our time, one may well be thankful for such a rendering of the music's proper scenic background and framework as was given at Covent Garden on all but the first of the four evenings in the production of the

present year. In the opening act of "Die Walküre" the setting was adequate, and a strikingly well-balanced performance was given by Mr. Van Dyck (Siegmond), Mr. Klöpfer (Hunding), and Mme. Bolska (Sieglinda). At the end of the only scene in which the three figure together Sieglinda, dismissed by her husband, stands at the door of the bedroom; Siegmund, who has told his story, sits on the further side of the stage, the central place being occupied by the beetle-browed Hunding. It is a moment big with fate in Wagner's peculiar manner. Nothing certain is known or decided, but glances full of inquiry and rapturous or sinister surmise pass between the three, whose variously coloured kinds of suspense the music interprets. Here the *ensemble* was truly admirable, the stress and peculiar atmosphere of that moment big with fate being successfully caught. Throughout the act Mr. Van Dyck's suppleness and resource were finely exemplified, the sombre figure of Mr. Klöpfer's Hunding contrasting effectively, while Mme. Bolska did much by intelligent acting and good singing to compensate for a certain lack of personal adaptation to the part.

The majestic Wotan of Mr. Van Rooy was much in evidence throughout the rest of the drama. A rare loftiness of conception stamps nearly all that Mr. Van Rooy does. On the other hand, he is somewhat wanting in suppleness, here and there, sacrificing the *ensemble* to some extent to his own rigorous and ultra-heroic impersonation. This is particularly noticeable in softer scenes, such as the leave-taking with Brynhild. Only in scenes where Wotan is wrathful or oppressed by the "too

vast orb of his fate" does Mr. Van Rooy succeed completely. His finest moment is in the muster of the Valkyries, where those terrible warrior maidens hold converse in music as wild and tumultuous as goes up from some great parliament of birds, till Wotan stamps with his foot, and the whole covey of them rush for their horses and go wheeling and galloping away into the clouds.

To the Brynhild of Miss Ternina it is not easy to do justice. No doubt a specialist in voice-training might have some objection to raise against the manner in which this or that note was produced, and as to her impersonation in the earlier scenes, where Brynhild brandishes her spear and sings "Ho-yo-to-ho," the doubt might be raised whether it is rugged enough. But on the whole this artist seems to present a case of almost providential adaptation to the task of impersonating Wagner's greatest heroine. From whatever point of view her impersonation be regarded, it seems better than one could reasonably expect. A most richly endowed and harmonious personality is the basis of it. Fully matching Mr. Van Rooy in breadth and dignity of conception, she greatly surpasses her distinguished colleague in tact and cleverness, whether the matter in hand be the management of draperies, the humouring of a horse, or any such secondary matter upon which the proper development of a stage picture may depend. Vocally, too, Miss Ternina is fully equal to the tremendous task, and her Brynhild is thus a truly wonderful revelation of Wagner's art at its best. For Brynhild is beyond all question Wagner's



finest individual creation. In a series of matchless scenes he shows us the development of the warrior-maid into a perfect woman, every phase of that development being touched with a kind of demonic power that makes it impossible for anyone altogether to miss the point. In the second act of "Walküre" Brynhild comes forth on to the crags in her shining armour, with helm and shield and corselet of steel. In the leave-taking with her obdurate father, who, against his better judgment, has given way to the counsels of Fricka—that Mrs. Grundy of Valhalla,—the insignia of her Valkyrie-hood begin to fall off, in anticipation of the humanising process that is to be completed when Siegfried, in the ensuing drama, removes the steel corselet for the bridal feast. Before our eyes, therefore, and step by step Brynhild is transformed, making the heroic life visible and rhythmic for us at every moment. She is the vessel into which Wagner has poured the very finest vintage of his genius. No blackguardly characteristics of the *Uebermensch*, such as develop so very freely in the Siegfried of "Götterdämmerung," are allowed to deform the figure and melody of the superb heroine, who to the end glows with intense and untainted life. Adequately to render such a conception—adequately both for our eyes and ears—is no small achievement, and it is Miss Ternina's achievement which well deserves to be reckoned, along with Dr. Richter's orchestral interpretation, among the glories of the present production.

### III.

"Siegfried is a revelation of sensuous life in its natural and joyous fulness. No historical dress



obscures his form, nor are his movements obstructed by any force external to himself. The error and confusion arising from the wild play of passion rage around him and involve him in destruction. But till that destruction is compassed nothing in Siegfried's environment can arrest his own impulse. Not even in presence of death does he allow himself to be swayed by any other influence than the restless stream of life flowing within himself. Fear, envy, and vindictiveness are alike alien to his nature, and so, too, is any desire for love arising from reflection. His every movement is determined by the direct flow of vital force swelling the veins and muscles of his body to rapturous fulfilment of their functions."

Such, according to his creator, is that central hero of the "Nibelung" dramas whom critics still for the most part hopelessly misunderstand, though the best of the actors who have to represent him seem long ago to have mastered his secret. It is a familiar fact that the cultivated instinct of a good actor will often go right where all current criticism goes wrong, and no figure of the world's drama, ancient or modern, exhibits the point in a more remarkable manner than Siegfried. To any actor, indeed, with the necessary personal and vocal endowment the part may well make a strong appeal. It is devoid of all subtlety, simply requiring him to know his words and his notes and not to allow the native hue of his resolution to be sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. Mr. Kraus, the Siegfried of the Covent Garden performances, did well in most essential respects.

But much more remarkable than any particular impersonation was the catching of the proper tone

and atmosphere in nearly every important scene of the three main dramas. The glowing forge in the depths of the primeval forest at the opening of "Siegfried," the play of the sunlight through the moving branches that so terrifies the dwarf accustomed to a subterranean environment, the highly realistic smith's work—all these accessories in the picture of the godlike youth were well done, and the peculiar early morning exhilaration of that first act was quite successfully realised. So, too, were the fairy-tale terrors of the dragon's cave and the leafy splendours of the glade in which Siegfried holds converse with the birds. Where there is room for improvement in the Covent Garden staging of these dramas is, above all, in the meteorological background of "Rhinegold" and "Götterdämmerung"; secondly, in the "Ride of the Valkyries," which has not hitherto been done in a sufficiently spirited manner anywhere but in Paris; thirdly, in the final scene of conflagration and ruin. At present the final scene is much too elaborately done. All that smashing and falling of timber is a mistake. A chaotic design painted on a sheet of canvas can be let down at the right moment with better effect to the eyes of the spectators, in addition to the immense advantage of producing no noise or dust, costing little, and being completely under control.\* The present method of rendering the scene is too costly, too noisy, and too dangerous. The Valhalla building should be recognisably the same as in the final scene of "Rhinegold."

\* This suggestion was adopted in the performances at Covent Garden in 1905.—ED.

Never have the musical splendours of the "Ring" been revealed to British audiences as in the past three weeks. The windy and cloudy eloquence of the "Walküre" music and the heroic pathos of Brynhild's leave-taking have long been pretty thoroughly appreciated, but not so the songs of the forge in "Siegfried," where Wagner throws an almost fabulous kind of energy into the picture of the typical young man singing at his work, summing up all that is finest in that enthusiasm of labour which is perhaps the best part of our inheritance from the nineteenth century. These songs were, in the recent production, allowed to develop without cuts or distortion. The brawny rhythm, the iron clangour, the fizz and tumult of the instrumentation—all these things came out as never before at a performance in this country. So, too, with the long love duet of Siegfried and Brynhild and the ravishing trio of the Rhine Maidens in the last act of "Götterdämmerung." But, apart from such dazzling moments, the performances were in their completeness and sustained excellence an extraordinary revelation of the composer's power in the use of musical symbolism. Just before the rise of the curtain on the first act of "Siegfried" one hears that whine or snarl of the Nibelung dwarf, entering on the minor ninth along with the hammering theme. It sounds merely comical and trivial. But just as a personal fault, first observed as something funny, may in the experience of life or study of history be found developing into a source of appalling mischief, so, as these dramas progress, do we find the symbol of Nibelung hatred developing from a comical snarl into those

monstrous and multitudinous yells that rend the welkin and dismay the soul amid the gathering horror of the "Götterdämmerung" tragedy. Persons who are in the habit of chattering about the *Leitmotiv* as though it were a nostrum might with advantage take note of a few such points. The symbols of Nibelung hatred are not more effective nor anywise better done than the other symbols in the "Ring," but they are shorter and more peculiarly orchestrated, and so easier to follow.

As to Dr. Richter's interpretation of these gigantic scores perhaps enough has been said. The modern executive musician can approach no greater task than that in the performance of which the foundation of Dr. Richter's reputation was laid when the work was heard for the first time twenty-seven years ago in the composer's presence, and we have been fortunate in hearing his authoritative rendering once more. If Wotan had understood his business anything like as well as Dr. Richter Valhalla would never have come to grief.

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### The Bayreuth Festival

July 23,  
1904.

Apart from the Wagner Theatre and the undertakings connected therewith, Bayreuth is a decayed "Residenzstadt," with an "Old Castle" of the fifteenth century, a "New Castle" of the eighteenth, and other not very carefully preserved relics of the Court which Franconian Margraves long kept here. Of country residences and "pleasaunces" too, designed in the over-fantastic

manner of the South German potentate, there is more than one in the neighbourhood, and no doubt such things help to create an atmosphere that is favourable to artistic enjoyment. The smoke of modern industrial enterprise is not unknown here, but in the fulfilment of the part of its destiny which is connected with Wagnerian drama Bayreuth is aided by the leafy dells and dingles and the stately avenues of the Hofgarten, if not by the fantastic waterworks of the "Eremitage."

The Festival, which stands as a concrete symbol of Wagner's artistic mission, is just now at the zenith of its prosperity. It is twenty-eight years since the theatre was opened and twenty-one since Wagner's death, and the only thing which Bayreuth now fears is American piracy. One kind of calumny after another has been silenced, and in years past the institution seems to have done nothing but gain in solidity and dignity. It has formed an international public with a somewhat higher average of intelligence than is to be found anywhere else; and if there are certain weak and wrong-headed elements in the internal organisation, they are not so bad as to ruin the combined result of the brilliant and exceptional talent with which nearly every department—musical, dramatic, scenic, architectural, mechanical, and administrative—is worked. One might make a long list of the points in which the Wagner Theatre is somewhat better than any other of the kind. For example, the situation and approaches are more agreeable, the exits and entrances are more convenient, the ventilation is much more satisfactory, the acoustic is much finer, the distractions during the performance are fewer in consequence



of specially good arrangements, structural and other, and by reason of the early start and long intervals the audience is less fatigued; the stage machinery works better, and the discipline behind the scenes is more thorough. The orchestra, besides being more advantageously placed, is larger, and has a higher average of executive ability. Apart, therefore, from the special Wagnerian enthusiasm, there is much to attract persons who take any kind of interest in musical drama, and as a matter of fact the audience commonly includes dozens of well-known musicians from different parts of the world whose own tendencies are anything but Wagnerian.

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**"Parsifal"**

*July 24,  
1904.*

On the second day of this festival "Parsifal" was given for the 122nd time in Bayreuth, where, since the original production in 1882, it has formed the principal feature of every festival except that of 1896. Any attempt to describe impressions of the performance has to be preceded by a shaking of oneself free from that hypnotic influence which Wagner's art in its latest phase exercises. The curtain falls on the first act, the lights are turned up, and one emerges quickly into the light of day to find oneself once more in the midst of a chattering but well-behaved international crowd that wanders about the open sandy space girdled with plantations on either side of the theatre. It is not quite the same experience as a child's on awakening from an importunate



dream, because the feeling that it was not one's own dream but another's is peculiarly strong, together with a sense of utter astonishment that it should be possible for the consciousness of an adult person to be ravished away into the dream-world of another. Then comes further reflection and the inevitable question how it is done. Is it primarily by means of the music, which passes through the chambers of consciousness like the fumes of an anæsthetic, or does the peculiar potency lie in the dramatic symbols, for the elaboration of which the subtlest essences of a hundred arts seem to have been brought together? All the objections to "Parsifal" would seem to resolve themselves ultimately into distrust of something that is so dreamlike, and dreamlike in a manner so inexpressibly soft and luxurious. It is all rhythmic with the slow, musically ordered movements of the Grail's knights, who are so holy as to feel sin like a bodily pain; it is solemn with hieratic pageantry, and rich with the lustre of costly stuffs and the glitter of ecclesiastical embroideries and jewels. In the first and last acts it has the atmosphere of a Christian sanctuary, and the second act, passing in Klingsor's garden, seems to represent the pleasures of sin as imagined by the most innocent of mediæval monks. All this the orthodox moralist regards with some distrust as tending to create a distaste for hard work and cold water. But let him remember the mischief done by the Puritans in the seventeenth century, and be careful how he lays about him with the iconoclastic hammer. Whatever else "Parsifal" may be, it is certainly the most marvellous theatrical show in the world, and, as

the ultimate achievement of a man who for a lifetime had been considerably in advance of any other person in knowledge of theatrical art, it deserves to be treated with a measure of respect.

What Bayreuth accomplishes at a "Parsifal" performance, in the smooth and harmonious working of infinitely complex scenic resources, is without parallel, and the almost miraculous stage management was last week at its best. The slow transformations of the first and last acts were carried out in faultless correspondence with the musical suggestions. The sudden collapse of Klingsor's garden into ruin and desolation was also perfectly done, and in all the elaborate evolutions of the knights' retainers and scholars there was never the semblance of a false move. A specially admirable feature was the fine co-ordination of the dangerously complicated musical scheme in the latter part of the first act, where the conductor has to keep together a body of singers and players who are spaced out at four different levels—the orchestra below the stage, the knights seated at the love-feast or manœuvring about on the stage, the older scholars on the first gallery of the dome, and the younger scholars at the top. All the multifarious choir-singing of boys and men was beautifully done; the only mistakes were made by Amfortas and Titurel. The conductor was Dr. Muck, of Berlin, whose *tempi* seem to have been considered too slow by some of the *habitués*, though his interpretation was admitted to be in all other respects above reproach.

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"The Ring"

July 28,  
1904.

This year's festival includes two complete presentations of the "Ring" tetralogy, of which the first began on Monday. It seems to be generally admitted here that the performance of the Prologue ("Rheingold") given on that day was the best that has yet been achieved. Dr. Richter was at the helm for the first time this year, and the generalship that has been one great factor in Bayreuth's reputation ever since the opening of the Wagner Theatre in 1876 soon became perceptible in the plastic force of the orchestral rendering and the consummate knowledge with which everything was disposed in such a manner as to give each performer the best possible chance of doing justice to himself and his part. Moreover, "Rheingold" is, of all the Wagnerian dramas, the one best adapted to display the art of Bayreuth advantageously. The staging is of the most extraordinary kind. All the action takes place up in the clouds, down in the waters, or where the forges resound in the fiery caverns of Nibelheim, and not one of the characters is a plain human being. Gods, goddesses, giants, dwarfs, and water nymphs make up the *dramatis personæ*, and the whole drama is more completely outside the range of ordinary operatic art than any other musical and dramatic work. It is therefore natural that Bayreuth, which alone among theatres devoted to musical drama is not hampered by the operatic traditions, should establish pre-eminence in the staging and dramatic presentation of "Rheingold." There is no part for a prima donna or leading tenor, and everything depends on a kind

of extraordinary character-acting created by Wagner, along with those richly animated figures from Norse mythology which so effectively represent the natural forces and psychic impulses of his greatest and most characteristic poem. The most important person is Loge, the tricky Fire God, who is far from sure that he did wisely in joining the firm of Wotan and Company.

In the great revival of the "Ring" here in 1896 the impersonation of Loge by the late Vogel of Munich was a brilliant feature. Vogel was at the time recognised as the best Loge, and his mantle has now fallen on Dr. Otto Briesemeister, who, with a much less effective costume than his predecessor's, dances very cleverly through his long and important part. But among the stage performers it was Mr. Hans Breuer, the representative of the dwarf Mime, to whom the principal honours of Monday's performance fell. Already in 1896 Mr. Breuer was the Bayreuth Mime, and he seems to have been steadily improving his presentation ever since. It is now beyond all expression brilliant. Mime (or Mimmy, as the name has been well Anglicised) is perhaps the best invented of Wagner's purely grotesque figures—better individualised than his master, the sinister Alberich, representing gold as a world-power, for whom Mimmy is compelled to do smith's work. From beginning to end the part presents unfamiliar problems to the actor, for never before was the attempt made to give a musical vehicle to such whining and cringing and snarling. But those problems have all now been solved by Mr. Breuer in a manner suggesting finality. He has penetrated to the very marrow of the composer's conception,

and he gives us a figure that glows with imaginative power at every moment. Almost equally good in its very different way is the mighty elemental brutality of Mr. Johannes Elmlblad's Fafner—another case of an actor completely identified with the particular part,—and the second giant (Mr. Hans Keller) fairly matched his colleague and Messrs. Breuer and Briesemeister in expressive pantomimic interpretation of the music. The enchanting "Rhine Daughter" trio of the first and last scenes was beautifully rendered, the swimming manœuvre of the former scene being done probably better than ever before. Besides doing justice to the drama as an allegorical picture of life in the light of certain nineteenth-century ideas, the performance was a specially good revelation of its amusing and naively entertaining qualities. Regarding the show simply as an enacted fairy-tale, one could not but call it a mighty good one, and that aspect of the matter was almost certainly never before brought out so well.

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"The Ring"

*July 30,  
1904.*

Too much ridicule has been expended on those who, in the days when the works of Wagner were new to the world, declared them impossible of performance. After witnessing one complete series of the dramas forming the programme of this year's festival I am profoundly impressed by the newness of the art that has been worked out, mainly in this place, under stress of Wagner's peculiar requirements. The stage manager and



the singing actor, no less than the orchestral player and the conductor, have been compelled to acquire a new technique. It is even possible to state approximately the order in which the special kinds of technique required by Wagner were developed. Of course the instrumental came first, for without it there could have been no attempt to bring the new art before the world. Here the most important influence, in addition to the composer's own, was that of Liszt, Bülow, and Richter—the original stalwarts of the Wagnerian school. Next arose a new race of dramatic singers, of whom Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Niemann, and Materna were early examples; and the key to the enigma of the music was found. But Wagner's art is complex. Including, as it does, all the elements of the tragedy, which Aristotle describes as having music for one of its parts, together with modern scenic presentation, it is indeed somewhat more complex than any other known art, and that is why it has taken so long to master the technique of it. To the civilised world of no more than twenty-five years ago it was still inconceivable that both the drama and the music in one work could be important. A play with a little incidental music was a familiar thing, and so was an opera with a conventional dramatic framework having as its only purpose the advantageous display of musical embroideries. But a dramatic work with music as an integral part lay outside the range of all that was then believed to be possible, and long after the new race of dramatic singers had arisen the peculiar problems of *mise-en-scène* and stage management which Wagnerian drama presents were left quite unsolved. However, no such battle had to be fought over the stage



presentation as had been fought over the music. There was the Bayreuth theatre, with plenty of time and, latterly, plenty of money to work out the scenic and mechanical problems; and very slowly they were worked out. The improvement since 1896, when I last saw the "Ring" here, is enormous, and from the mighty trilogy as now presented that old sense of awkward, cumbrous, and unmanageable material has to a great extent disappeared—not, indeed, to the same extent in all the four parts (prologue and three-fold drama). The change and improvement is most startling in "Rheingold," which, with all its mythological and thaumaturgical paraphernalia, used to be thought peculiarly clumsy and full of bad quarters of an hour, despite the genius that scintillated here and there. Now that the staging has been perfected, it no longer embarrasses the performers or distracts the spectator's attention, and one has unimpeded enjoyment of the story, with all its rich imaginative play and its Aristophanic quality, as it is interpreted by a group of actors and actresses who have thoroughly mastered their peculiar business. "Rheingold" one now perceives to be a comedy big with tragedy. Notwithstanding the undertow of forces making for monstrous mischief, it is as thoroughpaced an Aristophanic comedy as anything having Norse instead of Hellenic characters and imagery could be. The scene in which the different uses of gold are explained by Loge, with exquisitely humorous interpolated comments by Fricka (the Mrs. Grundy of Valhalla) and others, is worth the attention of any philosopher; and yet that and other passages of similar merit used to pass unnoticed. Together

with the mention in my former message of Messrs. Briesemeister's, Breuer's, and Elmlad's achievements as Loge, Mimmy, and Fafner respectively, there should have been some reference to the Fricka of Mme. Reuss-Belce, who was simply perfect in the scene where that dignified lady sidles up to Loge to inquire whether the gold cannot also be used to make nice ornaments for ladies.

In regard to "Walküre" and "Siegfried," which which have long been in the repertory of London, Paris, and other capitals, the superiority of Bayreuth is very much less certain—that is to say, of Bayreuth as represented by this year's performances. There was serious weakness in two out of the three great protagonists, Wotan and Brünnhilde, and for that weakness no degree of skill in the presentation of the finely fantastic and ever-shifting backgrounds could compensate, nor even the superb orchestral interpretation. The Siegfried of Mr. Ernst Kraus was, however, on the whole a very striking performance, as it was at Covent Garden in 1903. It was best in Acts i. and ii. of "Siegfried"—the forging of the sword and the slaying of the dragon, preceded and followed by the wonderful forest *rêverie*,—and it was least good in the "Götterdämmerung" scene, where the hero tells the story of his youth to his hunting companions. Here a certain lack of resource in purely lyrical expression was a serious defect. But on the whole Mr. Kraus would seem to be the best Siegfried of the present day—best, at any rate, of those who can be induced to enact the part without mutilation.

No excellence in the staging and general inter-

pretation could obviate or appreciably soften the unsatisfactoriness of "Götterdämmerung." The final drama of the "Ring" series remains a terrible monster among the dramatic works of mankind, with a dreary first and second act, in which little seems to occur besides the heaping up of gloomy storm-clouds. The fierce animation of the retainers' muster in the Hall of the Gibichungs produced on Thursday the utmost effect of which it is capable; but the atmosphere of these scenes in which the tragedy of the curse resting on the Ring is worked out remained, as before, almost intolerable; and, despite the ravishing Rhine-daughter music in the third act, the romantic beauty of the "Erzählung" (story of Siegfried's youth), and the monumental grandeur of the funeral scenes, the last day of the trilogy left one with the old sense of oppression. As most persons are aware, the whole "Ring" drama began in the composer's mind with "Siegfried's Death"—that part which is now called "Götterdämmerung,"—and the other three parts were written to lead up to it. Nevertheless the original nucleus remains the monstrous product of a disordered imagination, while the three parts, conceived as something secondary, form a series of masterpieces. Books, we know, have their fates, and the fate of this one is not the least curious. The experience of this year, while tending to show that the supposed defects of "Rheingold," "Walküre," and "Siegfried" almost entirely vanish in a rendering that is harmonious on all sides, leaves one with a greatly increased sense of the final drama's inherent unsatisfactoriness.

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## CHAPTER VI.

## TCHAIKOVSKY.

**Symphony  
No. 5 and other  
Works***January 21,  
1898.*

THE experiment of devoting an entire miscellaneous concert to the works of one composer is nearly always hazardous. We doubt whether any other composer besides Wagner has ever withstood such a test quite satisfactorily. It was, of course, inevitable that the unparalleled wave of popularity upon which Tchaïkovsky's "Pathetic" symphony has been carried over the country during the past two years should have had the result of bringing other works by the same composer to the fore. That result is in no way to be regretted. Tchaïkovsky is a thoroughly interesting composer. His power and originality can scarcely now be disputed, and, whatever may be the verdict upon his art arrived at by those competent to judge when the excitement of novelty shall have passed off, one fact seems already to be quite clear, namely, that he was a great master of the orchestra. Listening to Tchaïkovsky's music for a whole evening and comparing the new with former impressions may have revealed more defects and limitations than merits; but the experience confirms, to our mind, the view that the Russian

composer must be allowed to take rank along with Berlioz and Wagner as a consummate and original master of the orchestra, regarded as a medium of expression. He grasps the modern orchestra as if it were one instrument. He sweeps over it like a mighty virtuoso with unerring touch. He knows the suggestions and potencies that lie in the timbre of each pipe, string, and membrane, just as a man knows the articulations of his native language. To any musical strain that is in his mind he gives outward form with absolute success. In short, he has consummate ability to express himself in music, and such ability is so rare that it is sufficient alone to make a composer very famous. There remain, of course, certain questions about the self thus expressed, and not till we reach those questions do the defects and limitations of Tchaïkovsky's art come into view. The great prevalence of melancholy moods in Tchaïkovsky's music is a matter of common observation. When he desires to shake off his habitually gloomy and brooding state, how does he set about it? Just as one would expect with such a disposition—by frenzied excitement, by the blare and glare of military pageant or by an orgiastic dance. His lighter music is bizarre or sardonic when it is not merely intoxicating. The enormous predominance of the rhythmical interest over every other kind of interest, such as that of melody or harmony, in Tchaïkovsky's music, can scarcely have escaped notice; and rhythm is the lowest element in music; it is the element representing animal impulse, as shown by its preponderance in every kind of religious music (Palestrina, for example). The music of Tchaïkovsky rocks, tramps, jigs, whirls, and flies



far more than it sings; and when it does sing it is either profoundly melancholy, bitterly sardonic, or merely bizarre. The composer has absolutely no serenity in his disposition, no love of nature or of innocence, no naïveté, no calmness or coolness, no healthy activity, no religion, though much picturesque patriotism, and very little intellectuality—only just enough for the purpose of expression. Such is the disposition revealed in the art of Tchaïkovsky. Like Rubens, the painter, he cares for nothing but exuberant animalism—for Rubens' Madonnas and other quasi-religious pictures are all just as much studies of exuberant animalism as his Venuses and his boar-hunts. Tchaïkovsky, too, loves hunting; though his more special tastes are for fighting and military display, and for dancing. Such a character could not be otherwise than profoundly melancholy in the absence of strong excitement. At the same time, he was—again like Rubens—an artist of enormous power, and his creations have their value. The fifth symphony, which was given yesterday, affords a most interesting comparison with the sixth and last. Such a nature as, according to our view, Tchaïkovsky has revealed in his art would never be thoroughly dignified except in great grief or in some situation bringing his patriotism to the fore. This, we believe—added to the more complete maturity of the art,—is the explanation of that greatness which has been generally recognised as distinguishing the "Pathetic" symphony among the composer's works. Alone among the larger works of the composer it has dignity. The feeling that it embodies is tremendously deep and sincere. It is an utterance of a strong semi-primitive nature



with robust appetite, but also with an immense capacity for feeling—personal feeling, and family, tribal or patriotic feeling. In the symphony given yesterday, on the other hand, we have a feast of gorgeous tone-colour, orchestral figures of astonishing scope and ingenuity, here and there motifs that are poignantly expressive, vastness of design, superhuman energy; but the dignity of the work is marred by the perpetual intervention of riotous and frenzied rhythms. The other orchestral works given were all of minor importance. Perhaps the best was the “Romeo and Juliet” overture, dealing with a subject certain sides of which were naturally congenial to the composer’s temperament. He seized on these sides with unerring self-knowledge and made an eloquent musical picture out of them. “The Variations on a Rococo Theme” and “Pezzo Capriccioso” are two ingenious and bizarre pieces, both very cleverly scored, which enabled Mr. Carl Fuchs to display his admirable mastery of the violoncello as a solo instrument. They were both very finely played, and, especially the latter, aroused considerable enthusiasm. As far as the interpretation was concerned the symphony, too, must be unreservedly commended. There was only one work in the entire concert which, to our mind, bears the stamp of perfection—namely, the little song “Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt,” which is worthy to rank with the best lyrics by Schumann, and indeed shows the spirit of that composer in one of his moods—that which produced “Ich grolle nicht”—very strongly. All the songs were interesting. In fact, the lyrical power of Tchaïkovsky is so striking that it may be

placed side by side with his mastery of the orchestra among those qualities which make him a great composer. All that has been said with more especial reference to the orchestral works applies with equal truth to the songs; they are either melancholy, like the first, third, and last "given at yesterday's concert, or sardonic, like "Don Juan's Serenade." Brightness, happiness, confidence, resignation, reverence, sense of mystery are qualities as alien to the composer's nature as simple joviality or innocent badinage.

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**Symphony in  
F Minor**

*November 25,  
1898.*

The fourth symphony of Tchaïkovsky, which formed the principal orchestral work at yesterday's concert, is full of life and zest, affording an interesting glimpse of those powers which were destined to produce the "Pathetic" symphony. Composed some fifteen years earlier than the "Pathetic," the fourth symphony represents the composer in a very different mood, though with nearly the same technical powers. It is perhaps natural that the earlier work should be more cheerful; but, considering that the composer was thirty-eight years of age when he produced that earlier work, the music sounds curiously youthful. The difference between the style of the symphony given yesterday and the "Pathetic" is almost entirely of a kind that eludes analysis. It can only be stated broadly that in the "Pathetic" there is a depth and energy of feeling to be found in none but truly great works of art; also that there is mature

style, appearing especially in the marvellous tact with which so much rich, highly coloured, and dangerous material is disposed. On the other hand, the earlier symphony, while strongly akin to the "Pathetic" in rhythmic and melodic invention, figuration, instrumentation, and device in general, is not only wanting in the tact of the mature artist, but shows the composer not under the influence of any strong feeling, and simply revelling in his powers of gorgeous orchestration, ingenious thematic work, and marshalling of tone masses with a view to picturesque effect. Tchaïkovsky is nearly always martial in one part or another of an orchestral work. In the great symphony the first movement has a ferocious section suggesting actual slaughter, while the greater part of the third movement is an elaborate military pageant. The work given yesterday leads off with martial strains, which recur several times in the first movement and again in the last. The first movement also exemplifies the composer's practice of bringing in a good deal of development immediately after the statement of a theme, instead of waiting for the development section. Though every musical element is telling, the movement is too prolix. In the andantino it soon becomes apparent that the composer's mind is running on his national folk-melody, the second theme especially having a very strong flavour of Russian national music. The movement is short and very charming. Next one passes from song to dance, the scherzo being a kind of Cossack dance orchestrated in the most piquant style, the strings playing pizzicato throughout. Here again the composer is irresistible. The music is ballet-

music, not worthy of a symphony, but it is so exhilarating that there has to be a "truce with grimace." And the finale? On a former occasion we have declared our view that none of Tchaïkovsky's music except his last symphony has dignity, but probably in no other quasi-serious work has he committed himself to such an astounding piece of rodomontade as is here used to conclude the symphony. The music enters like a voluble showman, beating a drum at the head of a procession, and assuring the crowd that never in this world has anything been seen quite so wonderful as that particular show. The show then proceeds, seeming to be concerned with national exploits which are all illustrated by the comments of the same voluble showman. A meritorious rendering was given of this amusing and in some respects instructive work. Many of the wind-instrument passages are very trying for the performers, especially in the case of the bass trombone, which in the last movement sometimes has to play as fast as the flute; but the players struggled manfully with these difficulties and did justice to the score.

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**"Romeo and  
Juliet"  
Overture**

*December 14,  
1900.*

The case of Tchaïkovsky, with his one great Symphony overtopping by such immeasurable heights all his other compositions of whatever kind, is isolated. One is almost compelled to think of everything else in the light of the one great work. Here is something that dimly foreshadows the stupendous battle-picture in the first movement.

There we note some faint suggestion of that power to represent a heart full of the most awful foreboding, amid scenes of gaiety and gallantry, which gives its peculiar character to the celebrated 5—4 movement; and there are foretastes of the bustle and excitement rendered on a gigantic scale in the scherzo, of the triumphal note in the March, of the final despairing wail. But all else is faint and fragmentary by comparison with the great symphony. The "Romeo and Juliet" overture, played yesterday, is probably Tchaïkovsky's best early composition, and it is certainly that which suggests the great last symphony in the most unmistakable manner. The poetic basis of the tone-picture is to a considerable extent the same in both. A warning prologue leads to the scenes of violence and bloodshed. Then follows a romantic love-story with a tragic ending. Everything in the overture is extremely well done—the fighting music is graphic and the love music is deeply fraught with feeling,—but it is not a bit Shakespearean in spirit. The peculiar neuralgic pathos which haunts nearly all Tchaïkovsky's works takes us into a fevered and unnatural atmosphere very unlike Shakespeare's; and the fighting is gory and realistic in the haggard manner of Verestchagin. As with Berlioz's treatment of "Faust," one must not seek for any sort of fidelity to the spirit of the original. It is better to rest satisfied with the striking and eloquent picture, founded on external features of a well-known poem but belonging essentially to the composer's own dream-world. The overture was splendidly played yesterday. Dr. Richter's interpretation most fully revealed the beauty of the introduction, where the



composer had succeeded in finding a note of pathos unlike his usual narrow and egotistic or merely tormented vein. Specially remarkable was the fine precision of the percussion instruments in the sections representing the strife of the Montagues and Capulets; but it is scarcely necessary to mention details, for the whole tone-picture was superbly presented.

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**Symphony in  
E Minor**

*March 8,  
1901.*

There is a great diversity of opinion as to the merits of Tchaïkovsky's fifth Symphony. More than one London critic has expressed the view that it is equal to the much-better known sixth and last. Mr. Jacques declares in yesterday's programme that, though No. 6—the "Pathétique"—appeals more strongly to the emotions, No. 5 is constructively the finer work. On the other hand, we have the opinion of the Russian critic Berezovsky—quoted together with the same writer's detailed account of the work in a recent English book on Tchaïkovsky—that No. 5 is the weakest of all the Symphonies. There is something rather depressing in such extreme divergence of opinion. It proves one of two things;—either Tchaïkovsky is not one of the sane composers whose works stand in a certain clear relation to the musical needs of human nature; or else, for all our greatly increased musical culture, we are no quicker than were the men of Beethoven's day in our perceptions; and, in the absence of perception, we are even more tied down than were our predecessors by pedantic notions. The reception of the great



"Symphonic Pathétique" in this country disposes of the former alternative. No other instrumental work ever aroused so great a wave of genuine public interest, and even persons who are no great admirers of Tchaïkovsky ought, if they care for the musical life of this country, to take an interest in him, on account of the astonishingly sudden and powerful grip that he took of the public imagination. It is not to externals—such as instrumentation, counterpoint, form, and so forth—that we must look for the explanation. Glazounoff orchestrates no less brilliantly than Tchaïkovsky and has probably a greater mastery of scholastic device, and the same is true of Saint-Saëns. Yet neither of those masters ever did or could stir anything in the least like the interest that Tchaïkovsky stirs. We believe the secret of Tchaïkovsky lies first in his sincerity, his being in earnest, his intentness, his search after the true symbol of his idea or feeling, his rejection of mere fabricated music. In listening to Glazounoff one perceives the trotting out of device. "Note how cleverly," the composer seems to say, "how cleverly I introduce this theme in augmentation." Whereas Tchaïkovsky is always intent on his idea, and, when he uses device, it is with the air of a man deeply in earnest and grasping at a resource of expression. Thus the centre of gravity is with Glazounoff as often as not in the device, with Tchaïkovsky always in the message, and with that dim sub-consciousness of the musical soul we perceive the one to be a cultivated trifler, the other a man with something important to say. That is the first and chief point. Next comes Tchaïkovsky's gift of rhythm—the quality in music for which

the general public of the present day cares most. When a person of rudimentary musical notions says that he likes a good tune, it will nearly always be found that what he likes is the rhythm, and that the melody can be freely changed without his perceiving it. The same taste exists in the higher stages of cultivation. A hundred times commoner than a real sense of melodic beauty is the love of a powerful rhythm that carries the listener off his feet. Now Tchaïkovsky does that for the listener much more often than any other composer. He first captivates by something in which his gift of rhythm plays a leading part, and, having captivated, he does not disappoint us by saying empty things. Further points are his astonishingly rich harmony, which is never twisted and inconsequent, like so much of Berlioz's harmony, but always develops logically and clearly his vastness of design; his warmth of colouring, and his picturesque force. Needless to say, that to explain sudden and signal success with the general public there must always be a mention of weak points. Among Tchaïkovsky's weak points that which has gained him most popularity is his persistent habit of presenting his ideas in a sort of balanced and antithetical manner. He does not expect too much intelligence in the listener. First he says a thing, then he says it again an octave lower down or higher up and with different instrumentation; next he repeats a tag of what has just been said, and repeats that once or twice, and so forth. And the thing is not done artificially; such procedure evidently came natural to him. By the time he has finished, something of the idea has been conveyed into the dullest mind; and all

this is done along with the extremely modern harmony and with instrumentation so dashing, brilliant, and varied that only a dreadfully analytical person takes note of the thematic iteration. It is a remarkable point that while all the other symphonies are full of Slavonic folk-melodies, the thematic invention in the "Pathetic" is all original—every scrap of it. There is not a folk-tune from beginning to end. One has only to think of the first theme of the first quick movement to perceive how thoroughly the composer was worked up. The originality of it is absolute. One may go over all the orchestral composers from Haydn to Wagner and Brahms, asking oneself whether that theme could be by any one of them. Obviously it could not be the work of anyone else except Tchaïkovsky. On hearing that theme for the first time the listener pricks up his ears. "Here is a man with something to say," he thinks. Now there is nothing of that kind in No. 5. The thematic material has been obtained in an easy-going manner—mostly by borrowing. And the superiority of the great No. 6 is just as remarkable in the richness and spontaneity of development as in originality of thematic invention. In other respects the case against Mr. Jacques's view is much stronger. There is not the ghost of an indication in No. 5 of the power which produced that overwhelming battle-picture in the first movement of the "Pathetic," or of the completely new kind of eloquence introduced into the world of music in the third movement—the Scherzo-March—of the "Pathetic," or of the unparalleled poignancy of expression in the Finale. The fifth is a fine picturesque work, chiefly interesting for

the glimpse that it gives us of those exercises by which the genius destined to produce No. 6 strengthened itself. We hear many of the same orchestral effects, such as the frequent use of divided lower strings and the prominence of bassoon parts. The figuration in the Valse, and again in the Finale, also affords a faint premonition of the marvels that enthrall us in the latter work. But, before any comparison of the two is really possible at all, one must knock off the last movement of the "Pathetic" and take it as ending with the March, as the composer originally intended it to end.

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**"Pathetic"  
Symphony.**

*November 22,  
1901.*

"Eighth time at these concerts," says last night's programme, in reference to the great Tchaïkovsky Symphony, which is only eight years old. The performances in London are to be numbered by dozens, and whenever genuine orchestral concerts are given in this country the swan-song of the late Russian master has probably been heard more often than any other symphonic work. Let us not be in too great a hurry to protest against this state of things. The enormous audience of yesterday evening—much the largest of the present season so far—suggests that the public have not lost interest in the Symphony. Nor do we dissent from the views of the public in this respect. There is astounding potency in the charm of the work and in the appeal that it makes to the imagination. For some time past we have been preoccupied with the notion that it forms a sort

of pendant to Dvoràk's "New World" Symphony. Dvoràk has caught in his music the breezy, hopeful, democratic, optimistic, and free-thinking spirit of American life, with its upper side of furious go-ahead civilisation, and its under side of primitive humanity (Negroes and Red Indians) in which energy of feeling is out of all proportion to intellectual faculty. Dvoràk's slow movement is undoubtedly a hymn of such primitive humanity, with an undercurrent of meditation on the prairie by night, in which the movements of sap and the germination of seeds within the bosom of inexhaustibly fertile nature become, as it were, audible. It is something like the poetry that Walt Whitman would have written had he been a much better poet. In an analogous manner Tchaïkovsky has caught up and fixed in his "Symphonie Pathétique" the soul of modern Russia. Just as the American Symphony is breezy, democratic, optimistic, and free-thinking, so the Russian is languorous and oppressed, aristocratic, pessimistic, and hierarchic. The absence of any slow movement, except the dirge at the end, is intensely characteristic. The composer has no hymn of thanksgiving or serenely contemplative interlude to give us, but only something with the perfumed and artificial atmosphere of the ballroom, as a relief from the ardours and terrors of his military and patriotic passages. Both in his first and third movements he reminds us that the Russian, for all his profound religiosity and mysticism, for all his abundance of talent and exquisite courtesy under normal conditions, lives in a cruel country and has it in him to be more cruel than any other modern white man. The



dirge at the end we believe to be the most powerful expression of tragic emotion that exists in the entire range of music. Such a work will bear a good many performances, especially in a place where there is a Richter to interpret it. Of course neither the "New World" nor the Muscovite Symphony is for a moment to be compared with Beethoven. Fellows like Dvorák and Tchaïkovsky, belonging to the fringe of civilisation, have something of the savage about them, whereas Beethoven inherited the central European culture and expressed in music the emotions of a completely civilised character. The part of the nineteenth century subsequent to the death of Wagner will probably be remembered for the *avènement* of the semi-savage in music. But, be it remembered, music is an art of expression, and all thoroughly and richly expressive music is good music, no matter what the informing emotion or underlying idea.

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## CHAPTER VII.

## ELGAR.

## "King Olaf."

*December 2,  
1898.*

MR. EDWARD ELGAR seems to owe his fame almost entirely to those autumn festivals which are so important a feature of musical life in this country. An organist, with a turn for serious composition, occupying a post in some city where one of those festivals is periodically held, is favourably placed with a view to getting a hearing for the productions of his musical genius; and Mr. Elgar was, and so far as we know is still, organist at St. George's Roman Catholic Church in Worcester. His career as a festival composer dates from 1890, in which year his overture "Froissart" was produced at the Worcester Festival. Three years later a choral work—"The Black Knight"—was brought to a hearing in the same city, apparently with advantageous results to Mr. Elgar's reputation, for since that time he has devoted much of his energy to composition. The cantata performed yesterday evening for the first time in Manchester seems to have been the fourth of Mr. Elgar's important choral works. When first performed at the Hanley Festival two years ago it attracted much attention, and was hailed

by many writers for the press as a work for the Leeds Festival—generally considered the most important event of the kind in the country. The work composed for Leeds and produced there last October was called “Caractacus.” It is in general style similar to “King Olaf,” while naturally representing a later stage in the composer’s development. In both works one notes the same dramatic instinct, the same unconventional treatment, the same faculty of genuine thematic invention, and the same unmistakeable gift for orchestration. As this composer gains in experience it does not seem, as with many others, that his inventive powers become exhausted, but that, on the contrary, they ripen and develop. “Caractacus” is obviously a finer work in every way than “King Olaf.” Now, all these facts make Mr. Elgar a very interesting person. The qualities enumerated above—gift for thematic invention, ingenious and telling orchestration, unconventional treatment, and so forth—are extremely rare and valuable. It is quite possible for a composer to have a long and successful career without possessing any one of them, and it is therefore very natural that a composer who does possess them should be hailed with enthusiasm. But, unfortunately, they are not the only qualities necessary to a composer of extended choral works, and Mr. Elgar, who rises so far above mere feeble conventionalities in his actual music, is not free from the common but most mischievous delusion that almost anything will suffice by way of “verses for music.” He throws away the resources of his remarkable art upon a text that is in places unfit for any kind of musical treatment, and is, on the whole, hope-

lessly rambling, incoherent, and tiresome. One becomes interested in a dramatic episode where a bride seems on the point of murdering her bridegroom with a dagger that gleams in the moonlight. But the narrative wanders away to other subjects; a fresh heroine, with quite different affairs and interests, occupies attention, and one hears nothing more of the lady with the dagger. No doubt, the title "Scenes from" the Saga of King Olaf seems to justify such procedure, but it does not prevent the interest from flagging or the general impression left by the work from being fragmentary and incoherent. The best of the music is at the beginning, where there is an extremely fine chorus, "The Challenge of Thor," containing various musical elements all truly expressive and fraught with the same primitive and racy vigour. The more important of the elements in question are the Hammer music, the Iceberg music, the Thunder and Lightning music, and the strains which carry the defiance of Christianity by the old Norse religion. The most effective, too, of the solos is the long tenor recitative following the great chorus. At the words "listening to the wild winds wailing" a highly original and interesting strain begins to be heard in the accompaniment. But the promise of these fine things is not well carried out in the latter part of the work. Everywhere the difficulties are very formidable, and in a good many cases they were too much for the chorus, who, except in "The Challenge of Thor," did not sing in a very free or expressive manner. Nor did they always take their leads with precision; but, in a complex work abounding in accompaniment figures with

such puzzling cross-rhythms, these defects were excusable. The cantata did not seem to make any great impression on the audience; but we should expect to find, if ever Mr. Elgar were so fortunate as to obtain a really good subject and a good book, and especially a subject and book thoroughly adapted to his remarkable dramatic powers, that he would produce something of lasting value.

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**The "Enigma  
Variations"**

February 9,  
1900.

The style of composition called "Variations" is a striking example of a primitive form that has proved imperishable. Sir Hubert Parry has pointed out that the fundamental idea

of variations in instrumental music is co-ordinate with the *canto fermo* and counterpoint of the early choral composers. Each system resulted from an attempt at giving form and unity to a composition by repeating a theme over and over again, each time in some new aspect, or with fresh ornamentation; though the effect obtained by winding ingenious counterpoint for other voices about an unchanging *canto fermo* is, of course, very different from the tricking out of the melody itself. In choral music the *canto fermo* system almost died out when maturer principles of structure were discovered; but variation-form has never fallen into disuse at any period since its invention. It has been used by all the great masters, and by many of them as a vehicle for great and splendid ideas. General progress from the mechanical to the imaginative marks the

successive stages through which the form has passed. One great reason for its vitality is that it admits of treatment in every possible style. Variations may be melodic, or contrapuntal, or harmonic. A superficial composer can make them by simply worrying his theme, a profound composer by developing the musical ideas that are in it. Bach's were mainly contrapuntal, Mozart's mainly melodic—one may even say melismatic—and Beethoven made variations of every kind, in his later works obtaining results of undreamed-of grandeur from the form. But the later Beethoven has never really been followed by any mortal in the austere and wonderful path that he struck out for himself, though Brahms and others have obtained a few hints from him. The originator of modern romantic variations was Schumann, whose "Etudes Symphoniques" revealed a fresh source of life in the form, that has proved less austere and inaccessible than Beethoven's; Brahms, Tchaïkovsky, and many others having obviously derived inspiration from it. Mr. Elgar stands in a peculiar relation to the modern masters of variation-form. He seems to be much pre-occupied with the curious idea of musical portraiture, which, again, owes its existence to Schumann. The miniature of Chopin occurring in Schumann's "Carnaval" was the first, and perhaps remains to this day the best, example in its kind, and the sketch of Mendelssohn forming No. 24 of the same composer's "Album for the Young" is also a recognisable piece of musical portraiture. Mr. Elgar has carried out the idea in an extended scale in these variations. His theme, which he calls "enigma," has no eccentricity. It is a rather



march-like strain in regular form, having three sections, the last of which is a repetition of the first, with fresh harmony and instrumentation. There are nominally fourteen variations;—including the finale, actually thirteen, for No. 10, described as *intermezzo*, is not a variation. Each of the variations, and the *intermezzo*, bears initials, or a nickname, which are commonly assumed to represent the composer's friends. Why any such thing should be assumed we do not know. It is both possible and allowable to portray persons who are not one's friends, and some of Mr. Elgar's portraits seem to us extremely severe and satirical. One of the early numbers, in particular, gives a vivid impression of a very unsympathetic personality, garrulous, querulous, trivial, meanly egotistic, and rather ape-like. The composer does well to let the identity of the original remain shrouded in mystery. The variations are grouped according to the usual principles of contrast, and they are all extremely effective. However much the composer may call his theme an enigma—Berlioz called his variation-theme in an early symphony *idée fixe*—one can scarcely escape the impression that it represents the temperament of the artist, through which he sees his subjects; for that, and nothing else, is what forms the connecting link between any series of portraits by the same hand. Wonderful ingenuity is shown in varying the relation in which the theme stands to the musical picture. During the first part of the work, down to the end of the sixth variation, the attitude of the audience seemed rather reserved. But a change began to be noticeable at the seventh variation, called "Troyte," an impetuous presto



movement that shows a hitherto unsuspected kind of energy. Nor did the attention flag at all during the noble and serene harmonies of the ensuing Allegretto. The richly-organised "Nimrod," forming No. 9, leads to the dainty and tripping "Dorabella" Intermezzo, which has no connection with the theme. The eleventh variation, headed "G. R. S.," is another demonstration of abundant vigour, and the following "B. G. N." has for leading feature a fine lyrical melody for 'cello. No. 13 obviously has reference to someone on a sea voyage, the "prosperous voyage" theme from Mendelssohn's "Meeresstille" overture being heard amid delicate suggestions of distant sea sound. In the very extended finale there is some powerful polyphonic writing, and the movement ends with a repetition of the theme in augmentation, forcibly declaimed by the heavy brass to the accompaniment of the full orchestra. The audience seemed rather astonished that a work by a British composer should have had other than a petrifying effect upon them. They applauded with the energy that the composer's imaginative power and masterly handling of the orchestra deserve. Dr. Richter signalled to Mr. Elgar, who was seated among the audience, and he thereupon mounted the stage and received an enthusiastic greeting from the public. The striking success of this composition reminds us of the following passage occurring at the end of an article by Sir Hubert Parry written some years ago:—"It is even possible that, after all its long history, the variation still affords one of the most favourable opportunities for the exercise of their genius by composers of the future."

“Cockaigne.”

*October 25,  
1901.*

Dr. Elgar's more recent compositions seem to require nearly as much talking about as Wagner's. But, be it observed, that is not the composer's fault, but is the result of the primitive stage at which not only the bulk of our musical public but many of our “leading musicians” still find themselves, as regards understanding the poetic import of a musical work. On two occasions in recent years a work full of slaughter and frenzy, of barbarous revelry and sensuality, of glittering and blaring pageantry, and ending with annihilation—a work the powerful appeal of which lies precisely in the fact that it is the most powerful existing expression in music of everything most un-Christian and anti-Catholic—has been performed without public protest in a British Cathedral. We here refer, of course, to the “Symphonie Pathétique.” Dr. Elgar is another composer whose music means something; but what chance is there for us to understand him? One quails before the task of discussing in a concert notice all the questions to which such a work as the “Cockaigne” overture gives rise. First let us state, without stopping to give reasons, that we think it worth hearing and worth studying. If any previously existing overture is to be mentioned in order to indicate the type to which “Cockaigne” belongs, it must obviously be “Meistersinger.” The humorous element is somewhat more prominent than in “Meistersinger,” and the general tone and colouring of the two works are utterly dissimilar. But that the composer of “Cockaigne” had “Meistersinger” in mind is rendered practically

certain by one particular point—the use of a Londoner theme and of the same theme in diminution for the youthful Londoner, in exact analogy with Wagner's symbols for the Meistersingers and the apprentices. Again the opening bustle, giving way to a love-scene, suggests "Meistersinger," and so does the polyphonic elaboration of the middle part. But there is a great difference between following Wagner's procedure and borrowing his musical ideas. To some slight extent in the E flat section, and more particularly in the harmony thereof, we find the Wagner flavour. For the rest, while the procedure seems at any rate to be based on Wagner's, we find the materials used and the character of the artistic result achieved to be entirely different from Wagner's. There are seven musical elements in "Cockaigne," the significance of which may be roughly indicated as follows:—(1) Bustle of the streets; (2) a virile personal note; (3) companionship and interchange of ideas between two sweethearts; (4) pert children playing their pranks; (5) military band episode; (6) impressions on passing from the street into a church; (7) new phases of street-bustle music. Musical symbols of very considerable plastic force are invented for these things, and are woven into a powerful and entertaining tone-picture with that mastery of the orchestra which no one can now refuse to recognise in Dr. Elgar. He always works with definite lines, and does not seem to care much for those atmospheric effects in which certain moderns, such as Richard Strauss, are so strong. The music has a far wider range of ideas and emotions than would be possible in a poem occupying the same time in

delivery. It gives us impressions of London by day and by night, impressions that are partly realistic and partly antiquarian, following the flight of the imagination with absolute freedom, forming a sort of musical parallel to Henley's "London Voluntaries."

And lo! the wizard hour  
Whose shining silent sorcery hath such power!  
Still, still the streets, between their carcanets  
Of linking gold, are avenues of sleep.  
But see how gable ends and parapets  
In gradual beauty and significance  
Emerge! And did you hear  
That little twitter-and-cheep,  
Breaking inordinately loud and clear  
On this still spectral exquisite atmosphere?  
'Tis a first nest at matins! And behold  
A rakehell cat—how furtive and acold!  
A spent witch homing from some infamous dance—  
Obscene, quick-trotting, see her tip and fade  
Through shadowy railings into a pit of shade!

And if this is effective, does not a certain sonnet of Wordsworth's exist to prove that an aspect of London may furnish a magnificent poetic inspiration? It should be remembered that there is originality in emotion as well as in ideas and in devices; and this is where we find Dr. Elgar strong—perhaps stronger than any other British composer. Besides the technical ability to express himself in music, he has originality of emotion. He takes us into regions where music never took us before. As to his use of Wagner's procedure, that was also Beethoven's procedure in some of

his finest works. In fact, it is the procedure of everyone for whom music is a language, such as it has tended more and more to become ever since Beethoven's time. The history of music in the nineteenth century is the history of something growing constantly more articulate.

No doubt some persons would like to ask—Should we have known all this, or any of it, about the significance of the “Cockaigne” music had there been no programmes? The answer is, Probably not. But the beauty of an artistic design illustrating a certain subject may often be perceived when one cannot make out what the subject is. In such a case the subject is not “all nonsense.” It is the stimulating cause of the beautiful design, and it is very natural for those who find the design beautiful to like to know what it is all about. It is a mistake to think that a definite play of the imagination has nothing to do with musical composition. It has very much to do with it. The kind of music with no underlying play of fancy is only too familiar.

The name “Cockaigne” occurs in some form in old English, French, Italian, and Spanish literature, meaning “the land of delights.” The fancied connection with “Cockney” is of much later date. Henry S. Leigh's “Carols of Cockayne” (1869) shows the recognition of the word in the sense of “Cockneydom.” There is said to be a connection between “Cockney” and the French “coquin,” and if that is so the appropriation of “Cockaigne” as correlative of “Cockney” is justified by community of origin, all these words being derived from the stem of *coquere* (to cook). No doubt “coquin” originally meant “cook's boy” or



"loafer in a cook-shop," and "Cockney" at first meant something of the same sort. At the same time there hangs about the word "Cockaigne" a certain proverbial suggestiveness, derived from the time when it was used in the sense of "land of delights," the etymology being forgotten. It thus has a peculiar appropriateness as the title of Dr. Elgar's genial and largely humoristic tone-picture.

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"The Dream  
of Gerontius,"  
Birmingham  
Festival.

*October 3, 1900.*

"The Dream of Gerontius"  
Cardinal Newman called his poem, with exquisite modesty. How that poem may stand in the estimation of those who share Cardinal Newman's point of view in regard to religious matters is perhaps an important question, but not one with which musical, or any artistic, criticism is concerned. For nothing is more certain about art than that it is subservient to a person's view of life. Artistic or æsthetic criticism must be humble, and must abstain from trespassing on the ground of faith and morals. Indirectly, indeed, æsthetics may have a bearing on these more serious subjects. For is it not written of religious doctrines, "By their fruits ye shall know them"?—and nothing else is in so complete a sense a "fruit" of a religion as a work of art arising therefrom. Nevertheless, the function of æsthetics is not to commend or blame a view of life, but rather to enquire with what eloquence, with what sincerity, with what measure of convincing power the artist expounds his ideas and communicates his feelings,



whatever those ideas and feelings may be. With these reflections I find it necessary to premise my notes on Edward Elgar's new work. The reflections are rather solemn, but the new work is very solemn. It is deeply and intensely religious; it is totally unconventional, and must be discussed in an unconventional manner. First, then, let me state a point of difference from all that I have experienced in listening to other oratorios and sacred cantatas, and, I may say, all other musical works with words made by one person and music by another. The point is that *this* music, on the whole, is apt to bring home to the listener the greatness of the poem. The composer has not merely chosen from the poem such material as suited him. He has expounded the poem musically, and to the task of expounding it he has brought what may be described without inflation as the resources of modern music. We shall doubtless hear of plagiarism from "Parsifal," and there is indeed much in the work that could not have been there but for "Parsifal." But it is not allowable for a modern composer of religious music to be ignorant of "Parsifal." One might as well write for orchestra in ignorance of the Berlioz orchestration as write any serious music in ignorance of the Wagnerian symbolism. Edward Elgar does nothing so affected as to ignore the development which, for good or for evil, the language of music underwent at the hands of Wagner. His orchestral prelude, however, reverts to an earlier Wagnerian type. It gives a forecast of the whole story in such wise that at the end of it the imagination has to be carried back. We have the last agony of the

sick man, his death, and passage to the unseen. The symbols, though employed in the Wagnerian manner, are, nevertheless, thoroughly original, taking us into an atmosphere and a world absolutely remote from all that is Wagnerian. When the voice of Gerontius (assigned to a tenor solo) enters we are carried back to the death-bed—to the prayers of Gerontius and his companions. A series of choruses with intervening and accompanying passages for the solo voice is devoted to the King of Terrors. Here the music touches the various notes in the gamut of feeling, from the agony of terrors to serene confidence. After the parting of Gerontius, with the words "*Novissima hora est*," a new voice enters, that of the Priest (baritone), chanting "*Proficiscere, anima Christiana*." Among the supplications for the departed is a chant three times repeated, each of the two parts ending with a choral "*Amen*" that bears a tender echo of the mediæval "*Cantus fictus*." An extended section of chorus and semi-chorus bring the first part of the cantata to a peaceful and prayerful ending.

In the second part the soul of Gerontius is winging its way towards the celestial regions, holding colloquy with an angel. There is a Dantesque passage in which a chorus of demons is overheard by the pair—the soul and the angel. Gerontius is encouraged by the angel. Echoes of earthly voices, praying for the departed soul, are borne up from the earth, and in the end the soul of Gerontius is affectionately delivered over to Purgatory by the angel, there to wait suffering indeed, but in resignation and in the assurance of salvation.

Naturally the prevalent poetic note in such a work is the mystical exaltation, now of the contrite sinner, now of the aspiring saint. The chief climax is reached, not at the end, but in the hymn of the Angels, "Praise to the Holiest in the Height," recurring before the departure to Purgatory. But the whole work sings "Praise to the Holiest in the Height *and in the Depth*." A powerfully contrasting note is heard in the death-agony of Gerontius and, above all, in the chorus of demons occurring in the second part. Here a comparison with Berlioz is simply inevitable—for Edward Elgar's dramatic power admits of comparison with the great masters. His demons are much more terrible than those of Berlioz, who was a materialist in the profound sense—not, that is, in virtue of more or less shifting beliefs, but of unalterable temperament. Infinitely remote from that of Berlioz is the temperament revealed in Edward Elgar's music, which, like parts of the poem, fairly merits the epithet "Dantesque."

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<p><b>"Gerontius,"</b>  <b>Lower Rhine</b>  <b>Festival,</b>  <b>Düsseldorf</b>  <i>May 22, 1902.</i></p>	<p>"Ever since the far-off times of the great madrigal composers England has played but a modest part in the concert of the great musical powers. For the products of the musical mind it has depended almost entirely on importation, and has exported nothing but works of a lighter order." Such are the words with which the German author of the "Gerontius" programme, specially written for this Festival, introduces his subject. The economic metaphor is ingenious. It does not imply too much or justify the state of</p>
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things to which it refers. Rightly or wrongly, Germany and the Continent of Europe in general did not feel that serious English music was a thing to be taken seriously, and to that fact the writer refers with ingenious delicacy, going on to say that about the turn of the century a change began to be noticeable. Everyone conversant with musical affairs knows how that change was brought about, though not everyone on our own side of the Channel cares to admit what he knows. It is in the main to Edward Elgar—a man who has done his best work living quietly in the Malvern hills, without official position of any kind, remote from social distraction and the strife of commercialism—that the change is due. The presentation of so lengthy a work as the “Dream of Gerontius” at a Rhine Festival has a kind of significance that the English musical public would do well to consider. The programme is much more carefully selected than at our own festivals, the idea being not at all that it should contain “something for all tastes,” but that it should be characteristic of musical art as it now stands, giving only the most typically excellent of newer compositions, and of older compositions only those upon which it is felt that contemporary genius had been more particularly nourished. It is not accidental that on the present occasion the names of Handel, Mendelssohn, Schumann are absent while Bach is very abundantly represented; Beethoven’s name figures in connection with the most modern in feeling of all his works (the C minor Symphony), and Liszt’s with his revolutionary “Faust” Symphony. Nor is it accidental that the preference is given to Strauss among

German and Elgar among English composers. For those are the men who really carry the torch, and the Germans are not to be deceived in such matters.

The performance of "Gerontius" yesterday evening had a good many features of special interest. Full justice was done to the instrumental part of the work by the magnificent Festival orchestra of a hundred and twenty-seven performers. Those peculiar qualities of the imagination which make of Dr. Wüllner, jun., by far the best representative of Gerontius as yet found were once more demonstrated, and the part of the Angel was given by Miss Muriel Foster with the wonderfully beautiful and genuine voice that has long been recognised as her most remarkable gift, and with considerably greater and more expressive eloquence than any previous experience might have led one to expect from her. In the bass parts of the Priest and the Angel of Death Professor Messchaert sang with wonderful dramatic power, and the semi-chorus, seated in a line before the orchestra, acquitted themselves almost to perfection in the delicate task that they have to perform throughout the death-bed scene. I have already expressed the view that the final section of the first part, beginning with the Priest's "*proficiscere, anima Christiana,*" is the point at which one first becomes conscious of actual genius in the composition; but now, after further study and another complete hearing of the work, I am not quite satisfied with that statement. Perhaps at that point a good many listeners first become clearly conscious of the composer's genius. But on looking back at the extraordinary eloquence



and beauty of the musical symbolism in the prelude and death-agony of Gerontius, one perceives that the *quietus* which comes to the spirit in the scene following Gerontius's death is merely a climax in a process that really begins with the first notes. The heavenly calm at the opening of the second part I realised yesterday more thoroughly than ever before. Splendid as the treatment of the hymn "Praise to the Holiest in the Height" is, the final section is not so completely adequate as the rest. The truth is that the composer there found himself in presence of a task hopelessly beyond the powers of any mortal except Bach. In the "Sanctus" heard on Sunday evening the shining circles of the heavenly choir are, as it were, made audible to the ears of mortals. Bach could only do it once, and no other composer could do it at all. Elgar gives a beautiful and grandly conceived hymn of the Church Triumphant, and with that we may well rest satisfied. He is in the main a dramatic composer, and, in those cases where he enters the domain of purely religious music, he gravitates back rather to Palestrina, with his "souls like thin flames mounting up to God," than to the greater and serener spirit of Bach.

"Gerontius."

Preliminary  
Article.

March 12, 1903.

In subject, though not in treatment, this oratorio—the first performance of which in Manchester will be given this evening—is closely akin to the morality play "Everyman." Gerontius is not a historical character, but a typical person, belonging to no particular age or



country. He is further like Everyman in being a layman, who has lived in the world, as distinguished from the Church, and in being just a plain, well-meaning man, without very great or shining qualities. The poem on which the oratorio is founded begins, at a later stage than "Everyman," with the death-bed scene, and does not end with the death of Gerontius's mortal part, but peers wistfully into the world beyond, and "under the similitude of a dream," tells much of what holy men have imagined about the experiences of Christian souls going to their account under the guidance of angels.

In the oratorio the utterances of Gerontius are assigned to a tenor soloist, who in the first part has to deliver the broken phrases of the sick man "near to death," and in the second the delicately restrained raptures of the soul that "feels in him an inexpressive lightness and a sense of freedom," as he gradually becomes conscious of the angelic presence that is bearing him along towards the heavenly regions. The only other soloist in the first part is the Priest (bass), who delivers the solemn "*Proficiscere, anima Christiana, de hoc mundo,*" as the soul of Gerontius quits the body. In the second part the second and third soloists represent, one the Guiding Angel (mezzo-soprano) and the other the Angel of the Agony (bass), who, at the most solemn moment of the oratorio, is recognised by the Soul as "the same who strengthened Him, what time he knelt, lone in the garden shade bedewed with blood." The semi-chorus in the first part is the group of "assistants," or friends gathered about the dying man's bed. The function of the chorus in the

first part is not defined, but it may be taken as voicing the prayers and aspirations of other faithful souls, aware of Gerontius's case and sympathising with him. In the second part the chorus is now of "angelicals," now of demons. The semi-chorus again represents the voices of friends on earth, which at one point are imagined as again becoming audible to the Soul, and also takes part in certain phases of the great hymn "Praise to the Holiest in the Height," where the vocal harmony falls into as many as twelve parts.

Those who are to hear this music to-day for the first time should beware of judging it by false standards. Let them be prepared for the fact that from beginning to end there is not a particle of anything in the least like Handel or Mendelssohn. Without the slightest intention of doing anything revolutionary, but simply following the bent of his own genius, the composer here brushes aside the conventions of oratorio very much as Wagner brushed aside the conventions of opera, and justifies himself just as thoroughly in so doing. To hear the "Gerontius" music is to become acquainted with by far the most remarkable and original personality that has arisen in musical Britain since the days of Purcell. One might trace the manifestations of that originality in the harmony, that always shows a touch both sensitive and sure, in the orchestration and interplay of chorus and semi-chorus, in the amazing sweetness and depth of feeling that sounds in the Angel (mezzo-soprano solo) music, in the force and truth of musical expression which, for the most part, extends even to elements of minor importance in the work. But for the present these broad indica-

tions must suffice, and we will only add the warning that the music is powerful, subtle, and of manifold significance, not to be judged in too great a hurry, and yielding up the best of its secrets only to those who listen repeatedly and study between.

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**"Gerontius,"**  
**Hallé Concerts**

*March 13,*  
*1903.*

Originality is disadvantageous to a composer at first in two ways. The more obvious is that listeners find the music speaking to them in an unknown or partially unknown tongue, and are displeased; and the less obvious, that players and singers cannot, as a rule, do justice to an unfamiliar style. When it is a case of winning recognition for something new and original a thoroughly adequate rendering is half the battle. Such a rendering carries with it a sense of enjoyment and satisfaction in the performers, and there is always a chance that this may to some extent communicate itself to the public; whereas in the other case the embarrassment of the performers will certainly communicate itself, and the audience attribute everything unsatisfactory to the unknown or insufficiently guaranteed composer. In Elgar's "Gerontius" the originality is strong and unmistakeable, and the performers find their technical skill severely taxed. But fortunately the composer has a clear head; he knows the technique of each instrument and he never miscalculates. Performers therefore find their task, though often difficult, is always possible and, further, that the result is always satisfactory. For Elgar has an

ear; he is a man of tone, and does not care for music that looks well on paper but sounds rather muddy. These points, known to those who for some time past have taken a close interest in Elgar's work, made it possible to hope that the Manchester performance of his great oratorio would be a striking success, and perhaps even throw a new light on the merits of the composition; and it can scarcely be questioned that the experience of yesterday evening fulfilled those hopes. It was doubtless the most carefully prepared of the performances that have been given thus far in this country. Dr. Richter was, for various reasons, peculiarly anxious that it should go well; Mr. Wilson made up his mind some time ago that whatever conscientious work could do to secure a worthy performance should be done; the hopes and endeavours of choirmaster and conductor were seconded by the choir in an admirable spirit; and, though it seems that for some time the usual difficulties of an unfamiliar style were felt, not a trace of any such thing was to be observed in the performance, the remarkably willing and energetic style in which the choral singers had grappled with their task bearing its proper fruit in a rendering that sounded spontaneous and unembarrassed, as though the singers were sure of the notes and could give nearly all their attention to phrasing, expression, and dynamic adjustments. In the highest degree remarkable, too, was the orchestral performance. Passages of such peculiar difficulty as the rushing string figures, that represent the strains of heavenly music overheard by the Soul and the Angel as they approach the judgment-seat, came out with much greater distinctness than we

have ever heard before, and we had a similar impression at many other points in the performance, which was as delicate as it was precise in detail and broad in style. But experience of all the complete performances yet given induces us to think that the difference between thorough success and ordinary half-success with this oratorio depends more on the semi-chorus than on any other point, and this is where the pre-eminence of last night's rendering, among all yet given in this country, is most unquestionable. Though not placed in front of the orchestra—as they should have been and, we hope, will be next time,—this group of twenty picked singers was really excellent. The voices blended well, and their combined tone was clearly distinguishable from the larger choir's. At the notoriously dangerous points, such as the re-entry with the "Kyrie" after the invocation of "angels, martyrs, hermits, and holy virgins," there was no hint of embarrassment, and they played their part as a slightly more delicate choral unit with absolute success in the litany and throughout the marvellous concluding chorus of the first part, where, as the original analysis suggested, the noble pedal-point harmonies symbolise the swinging of golden censers, as the supplications of the friends and of the church rise up to the throne of God. Among the astonishingly new kinds of musical eloquence obtained in this work by the interplay of chorus and semi-chorus it is worth drawing special attention to the tenor and alto unison in the semi-chorus on p. 108 (we quote from the second edition). The passage is not difficult, but to realise the particular effect of tone as well as it



was realised yesterday shows exquisite adjustment.

As principal soloist Mr. John Coates had an enormously difficult task, which he performed about as well as was possible with the vocal material that has been assigned to him by nature. All that thorough knowledge of the part, together with high artistic intelligence, could do was done. His voice did not break on the high B flat (p. 33), and he seemed to be well disposed, notwithstanding his recent illness. Though it is usually said that Elgar writes better for orchestra than for choir, and better for choir than for the solo voice, he was very finely inspired when he conceived the part of the mezzo-soprano Angel. The opening arioso, "My work is done," is a most lovely song, to which the haunting "Alleluia" phrase forms a kind of refrain. But even this—one of the very few detachable things in the oratorio—is not the best of the Angel's music. It is surpassed by the other song, "Softly and gently, dearly ransomed Soul," where the dropping of the Soul down into the waters of Purgatory is accompanied by music of quite unearthly sweetness and tenderness. These are things which make it seem almost a shame to discuss this work in any purely technical aspect. Miss Brema made the Angel's part one of the few entirely satisfactory features of the first performance, and again yesterday her nobly expressive style did full justice to the marvellous beauty of the music. Mr. Black was vocally irreproachable in the part of the Priest who speeds the parting soul of Gerontius, and again as the Angel of the Agony in the second part.

In reference to a musical composition the word "dramatic" has sometimes to be used in a sense



different from "theatrical." Thus the two great Passions by Bach—the "St. Matthew" and the "St. John"—both have a dramatic element so strong that at certain points the music becomes altogether dramatic. Yet no sane person ever called it theatrical, in the sense of unfit for a church. By "dramatic" in such cases one means two things—(1) having thematic material that is conceived with a certain vividness, in reference to a particular situation or mood of feeling; (2) developed according to procedure that does not sacrifice the vividness to formal or structural considerations. In this sense, then, we call Elgar's "Gerontius" a dramatic composition from beginning to end. To find fault with it for the absence of choral climax in the manner of Handel and Mendelssohn is as much out of place as it would be with Wagner's "Tannhäuser." On the other hand, we do not agree with the criticism that "Gerontius" is Wagnerian music. In two places there is a brief and faint suggestion of "Parsifal," first in the *sostenuto* theme for *cor anglais* and 'celli that enters in the fifty-second bar of the Prelude and recurs in some form at several points in the course of the work, and secondly in a recurrent phrase for strings at the entry of the recitative assigned to the Angel of the Agony—and to some extent throughout that recitative, which vaguely recalls "Parsifal." The other elements we find to be unlike Wagner and unlike every other composer but Elgar. These elements it is convenient to classify, not according to the usual technical or formal principle, but according to a dramatic principle. One notes, in the first place, four main categories—(1) the purely

human; (2) the ecclesiastical; (3) the angelic; (4) the demonic. The Prelude opens with the symbols of Judgment and Prayer. Next the "slumber" theme enters, to be joined at the fourteenth bar by the "Miserere." The note of feeling contracts and sinks towards utter abasement, which reaches the lowest point in the *cor anglais* theme with *tremolando* accompaniment. But now the sick man's despair finds expression in a loud cry, which is answered in the majestic and ringing tones that remind him to face death hopefully. A quite new musical element enters with the Andantino theme, developed at some length, and informs the penultimate section of the noble tone-poem, which continues till a brief *reprise* of the slumber theme suggests the passing of the soul. New phases of the Judgment theme connect the Prelude with the opening recitative, and here the imagination has to be carried back, as usual after the Prelude of a dramatic composition, which as a rule epitomises a good part of the action. It is evident, then, that the Prelude is concerned only with the first two of the categories above enumerated—that is to say, with the purely human and the ecclesiastical, and not at all with the angelic or demonic. Of the angelic music the principal elements, in addition to those already mentioned, are the various phases of the great hymn "Praise to the Holiest in the Height." The extraordinary demon music would in itself offer material for an essay. Here we can only touch on a few obvious features—the upward rushing semi-quaver figure in chromatic fourths, which is grotesque and rat-like; the three-part figure for strings in quavers which is first heard with the

words "Tainting the hallowed air," but belongs more particularly to "in a deep hideous purring have their life"; the terrific fugato "dispossessed, thrust aside, chuck'd down"; the sinister and ominous four-note theme "To every slave and pious cheat"; the *motif* of demonic pride, p. 83; and the sarcastic prolongation of the last word in "He'll slave for hire." The long chorus formed of these elements is a welter of infernal but most eloquent sound, the enormous technical difficulties all of which were completely mastered yesterday.

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**"The Apostles"** To-day, when Elgar's new Oratorio "The Apostles" was first publicly performed, was a sufficiently striking contrast with the corresponding day in the Festival of three years ago that witnessed the production of the same composer's "Gerontius." On that earlier occasion the interest both of performers and public was languid. That Elgar's music was difficult and harassing to perform was generally known, while the merit of it was regarded as doubtful. The upholders of British musical orthodoxy, with their faith in the saving virtues of eight-part counterpoint, shook their heads, the choral singers found their work disconcerting, and the public doubted whether the composer was anything more than an eccentric. The three intervening years have placed Elgar's reputation on a very different footing. Vague hostility towards the unusual and the unknown has given way almost universally to the recognition that he is one of the great originals in the

musical world of to-day; and he thus compels attention even in those who instinctively dislike both his particular methods and the kind of general atmosphere into which his religious art transports the listener.

In "The Apostles" Elgar adheres completely to those principles which were exemplified by "Gerontius" first among works of British origin. That is to say, the music is continuous, as in Wagnerian musical drama. There is no such thing in the work as a detachable musical "number"—whether air, song, chorus, concerted piece, march, or anything else. The composer has musical symbols corresponding to ideas, feelings, moods, aspects of nature or personality, religious conceptions or aspirations, animated scenes of popular life, phases of local and national custom, exhortations of the angels, suggestions of the devil, mystical rapture, rebellious despair; and he uses those symbols in the manner of a language. There is no mechanical work, no carrying out of architectural schemes with lifeless material. Everything in the score is vivified by the idea. The composition heard to-day consists of the first and second parts of the projected oratorio. In the first part there are three scenes—"The Calling of the Apostles," "By the Wayside," and "By the Sea of Galilee"; in the second part four scenes—"The Betrayal," "Golgotha," "At the Sepulchre," and "The Ascension." After the prologue and the narrator's opening recitative, the setting forth of the Apostles' calling begins with the changing of the Temple watch at dawn, the watchmen on the roof as they salute the rising sun being conceived as the unconscious heralds of

Christ's kingdom on earth. Here the musical treatment is stamped with the utmost grandeur, and points of amazingly vivid and picturesque detail are successively made, the curious Oriental *Melismata* of the watchman's cry, accompanied by the *Shofar* (Hebrew trumpet of ram's horn), giving way to the psalm within the Temple, between the phrases of which is heard the brazen clangour of the opening gates, while the air is flooded with the rushing music of harps. For the psalm an old Hebrew melody is used. So rich in matter is the text of the oratorio that I cannot attempt here even to give an outline of it, but must refer readers to Canon Gorton's booklet "An Interpretation of the Libretto" (Novello and Co.). There will be found an account of the sources from which the composer took his text, and in particular the justification for his view of Judas as a man who intended not to betray his Master to destruction but to force His hand, to make Him declare His power and establish His earthly kingdom forthwith—a view for which there would seem to be patristic authority.\* The oratorio is not theological; it is a dramatisation of the Gospel story that may be compared with Klopstock's "Messiah." After the introductory sections, broadly expounding the scheme of Redemption as accepted by the entire Christian world, but not enforcing any particular doctrine, all the stress is laid on the individuality of the persons—the Apostles, the Magdalene, and the Mother of Christ—and on the collective character of the groups, such as the women who are scandalised at the ministra-

\* Compare De Quincey's famous essay on Judas Iscariot.—ED.



tions of the Magdalene and the mob which cries "Crucify Him!" As an accompaniment of the drama we have the mystical chorus of angels commenting on the progress of earthly affairs and giving utterance to the sweet, passionless jubilation of sinless beings after the Ascension. To those who are acquainted with "Gerontius" it is almost needless to say that the composer is at his best in rendering the music of the heavenly choir. His marvellous faculty of finding music that matches the words inevitably, so that once heard the associations seem to have been long known, is here repeatedly illustrated. Perhaps the most absolutely perfect examples occur at the words "What are these wounds in Thine hands?" and in the recurrent "Alleluia" phrase.

Elgar's austerity is more strongly pronounced in "The Apostles" than in "Gerontius," and so, too, is his audacity in using the special resources of the modern dramatic orchestra to expound a religious theme. The old pompous oratorio manner he has left an immeasurable distance behind him. He sticks at nothing in his determination to cut down to the quick of human nature, to reject all abstractions and conventions and illustrate an idea or fact of religious experience in its relation to actual flesh and blood. The sinister parts of the oratorio recall by their general tone, atmosphere, and colouring the scene in Klopstock's "Messiah" in which an avenging angel carries the soul of Judas up to Golgotha and there shows him the results of his work. Mighty as the music is, it is all strictly illustrative, and so the centre of gravity remains in the text.



Some time must elapse yet before anyone can offer a confident estimate of "The Apostles" as a work of art. It will possibly be found to stand to "Gerontius" in something like the relation of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to his Seventh, the later work being of greater depth and significance but less perfectly finished.

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"The Apostles," Elgar's most recent oratorio,  
**Preliminary Article** "The Apostles," which will be  
*February 25,* heard by the Manchester public  
*1904.* for the first time this evening,  
stands in much the same relation  
to recent works in oratorio form

by other composers as one of the later musical dramas by Wagner holds to the kind of opera that was in vogue when he began to write. According to current ideas, justified by the practice of many well-known composers, an oratorio comes into existence by some such process as the following. A composer casts about for a subject, either being guided in his choice by consideration of what is in some manner appropriate to the particular occasion, or simply taking a story from the Bible that has not been used before, or not too frequently before, for musical purposes. He then either obtains the services of a librettist or himself arranges a libretto setting forth the chosen story. In the drawing up of the libretto the most important matter is the engineering of "opportunities" for the composer—here an effective air for the principal personage, there a chorus with scope for effective contrapuntal writing, everywhere due regard for the well-varied interest which the

public loves, and, at the end of a part, provision for an effective Finale. But some recognised kind of musical opportunity is always the chief matter. No one cares much about the subject except in so far as it provides the musical opportunity of an accepted kind. It is a case of chorus, air, concerted piece, march, air for another sort of voice, and Finale, with connecting recitatives as a necessary evil, and the whole thing standing or falling according as the composer seizes the said opportunities and turns them to account in the accepted manner, or neglects or fails to do that. For so long a time has that kind of oratorio been regarded by the general public as the only possible kind, that even now immense numbers of persons discuss works like "Gerontius" and "The Apostles" on the old lines. That a musician should have a mind, and a message to which notes and chords are subservient, is an idea so new as to be disquieting, if not at once dismissed as absurd. People are so much accustomed to say that they never did care about the subject of a musical work; that no sensible person does; that if the music is pretty the work is good; and there is an end of the matter. Yet now comes a composer and makes the subject the chief thing, writing music that gives no one the slightest encouragement to take interest in it apart from the subject—in short, displaying the most complete indifference to everything that used to be expected of a composer, and giving us all to understand that, in a religious work, if the music does not in some clear manner contribute to the exposition of the subject, it is not justified at all. In this respect "Gerontius" and "The Apostles" are

alike. People can take them or leave them, but they cannot make them out to be pretty music, such as one can enjoy without "bothering about" the subject. For Elgar so orders that we have to enjoy with the head and the heart or not at all. He will not allow us to enjoy simply with the nerves or by recognising approved kinds of musical rhetoric.

Whatever Elgar may do in the future, he can never approach a more weighty subject than is expounded in the two parts of "The Apostles," which make up the oratorio in its present form. This deals with the calling of the Apostles and with some of the most important incidents in the life of the Redeemer during His ministry. Everyone intending to hear the work should read the short and clear account given in Canon Gorton's "Interpretation of the Text." The writer is remarkably successful in bringing out the profound consistency and psychological insight which distinguish this oratorio text so very sharply from most others. Attention may be drawn specially to the characterisation of the three Apostles, John, Peter, and Judas, expounded mainly on pages 13 and 15. Canon Gorton also shows us the sources from which some of the most fruitful ideas and telling symbols of the oratorio have been derived. The music exemplifies a further development along the lines indicated by "Gerontius." In the resources which he calls into play the composer is a thoroughgoing modern. His orchestra is of great size, and he does not scorn the specially modern instruments or the modern tendency to group and subdivide in an elaborate and subtle fashion. In the quality of his absolute musical

invention he shows himself to be neither a classic nor a romantic, but a psychological musician. His thematic web is the exact analogue of the emotional and imaginative play to which the exposition of the story gives rise from point to point, and it thus partakes of the nature of language. The composer cares nothing for accepted views as to what is in accordance with the proper dignity of oratorio; but, trusting to his conception as a whole to ennoble every part, he allows himself to be here and there extremely realistic, very much as the great religious painters have done. He works on a great scale; in the handling of musical symbols he is not dismayed by tasks that might well be considered impossible, and he thus reminds one of the compliment which Erasmus paid to Albrecht Dürer—"There is nothing that he cannot express with his black and white—thunder and lightning, a gust of wind, God Almighty and the heavenly host."

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**"The Apostles,"** A faultless rendering of "The  
**Hallé Concerts** Apostles" is not to be expected.  
*February 26,* The same thing has been said  
*1904.* of "Gerontius," and the score  
 of the later work yet more  
 obviously transcends the powers  
 of the best endowed and disciplined musical forces  
 to render it in a manner which "leaves nothing to  
 be desired." All hope of reaching the end of  
 their task with a feeling of complacency must be  
 abandoned by the choir, orchestra, soloists, and  
 conductor who undertake to perform "The  
 Apostles," which, in point of technical difficulty,

is a "Symphonie Fantastique" and Mass in D combined. Still, in a relative sense, a rendering may be satisfactory—in the sense that it has the root of the matter in it, not that it is faultless in every detail,—and in that sense we should call the rendering of yesterday highly satisfactory. The general intonation of the choir was better than on any previous occasion, all the delicate fluting rapture of the celestial choruses at the end sounding wonderfully sweet and showing not the least trace of fatigue. The orchestral playing was more subtle than at Birmingham, and it seemed to afford a better justification of the composer's extraordinary colour schemes. It would be hard to suggest a better representation for any of the solo parts. As at Birmingham, Mr. Ffrangcon Davies gave the words of the Redeemer with admirable dignity, and here and there with a trumpet tone in his voice that might have reminded an Ammergau pilgrim of the late Joseph Mayer. As the Narrator and the Apostle John Mr. Coates gave a rendering worthy of his Gerontius earlier in the season. In the parts for women's voices Miss Agnes Nicholls and Miss Muriel Foster once more proved their immeasurable superiority to singers of the "star" order in music of real poetic quality. Mr. Black gave a most telling interpretation of the part of Judas, which, as in the Passion Play at Oberammergau, has greater dramatic significance than any other. All the solo parts, except the Redeemer's, are in certain sections so much interwoven with each other and with the chorus that the combined result overpowers the individual interest, though in the parts of the Magdalene and of Judas there are also



important independent developments. There can be no question as to the general excellence of the rendering, and the audience was on the same enormous scale as when "Gerontius" was given in November; but the reception was very different. There was applause, of course, yesterday, but no scene of great enthusiasm such as the earlier and simpler oratorio evoked. Some persons seem to be of opinion that the comparative reserve of the public was caused by the extreme solemnity of the subject; that they were really impressed by the music, but in such a manner that there was no inclination to be demonstrative. In this there may be some truth; but, "The Apostles" being unquestionably much more austere and difficult to understand than "Gerontius," we are inclined to accept the simpler explanation that the audience did not like it so well.

It seems impossible to deny that the music of "The Apostles" represents in many important respects an advance upon the earlier oratorio. The poetic theme of the whole work is incomparably more ambitious, and the musical invention is in more respects than one of greater power. In regard to this point the obvious case to take is Mr. Jaeger's example 3 (Novello's edition), "Christ, the Man of Sorrows," that being the *motif* of which more frequent and varied use is made than any other. Here we find unmistakable progress. In its simplest form the theme is more intense and more profound in feeling than any in "Gerontius," and furthermore the manner in which the significance of it develops throughout the work, up to the Ascension phrase, where it occurs in its most expanded form, though not for the last time,



shows a great advance in the composer's art. Again, the interest of the "Apostles" music is much more varied. All the symbolism having reference to Christ in solitude makes a most powerful appeal to the imagination; and the opening of the Temple gates at dawn is a scene of astonishingly graphic force and bold design. In the second part the tragedy of the Passion is given in four scenes of tremendous intensity, and then, in the section headed "At the Sepulchre," we begin to become aware of the spirit which is Elgar's most rare and wonderful possession. "And very early in the morning," says the text, "they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun." Thereupon are heard the watchers singing an echo of the music from the great sunrise scene at the beginning. After a dozen bars the fluting notes of a celestial chorus begin gliding in, and then we have an example of that *naïf* mediævalism at which the second part of "Gerontius" here and there hints. A kind of unearthly exhilaration begins to sound in the music. The Resurrection has brought a new fact into a sorrowful world. It is a sublime adventure, at news of which heaven and earth bubble into song. Throughout all the rest of the work the composer creates that sense of the multitudinous which belongs to parts of the hymn "Praise to the Holiest" in the earlier oratorio. But the angelic rapture that accompanies the Resurrection and Ascension in the "Apostles" is far greater and more wonderful. The heavenly strain is repeated in so many different ways that the air seems to be full of it, and it never loses the angelic character by becoming militant or assertive. It remains to the

end an efflorescence of song—the sinless, strifeless, untiring, sweetly fluting rapture of the heavenly choir, mixing or alternating with the more substantial tones of holy men and women on earth. Elgar can also render for us the grief of angels. This he does in a page of unparalleled beauty, describing how Peter, after denying his Master, went out and wept bitterly. This page alone might well save the composition from ever being forgotten.

The less convincing parts of the oratorio are sections ii. and iii., especially those parts devoted to the Beatitudes and the conversion of the Magdalene. It is obviously a work the secrets of which are to be penetrated only with the aid of many hearings and much study. At present we are disposed to regard “Gerontius” as the more perfect work of art, though the individual beauties of the “Apostles” are greater and more wonderful. Nearly everything in the later oratorio is stronger. The symbols of the Church show an advance upon the corresponding parts of “Gerontius” scarcely less remarkably than the symbols of the heavenly choir. The strange Old Testament element connected with the Temple service again shows imaginative power of quite a new kind, wonderfully enriching the background of the composition, and the tragic force of the “Passion” scenes is immensely greater than anything in “Gerontius.” But with our present degree of knowledge we miss in the “Apostles” that crowning artistic unity which prompted us to describe “Gerontius” as a pearl among oratorios.

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"In the  
South"

November 4,  
1904.

Sir Edward Elgar's most recent Overture, "In the South," has a picturesqueness, or rather a kind of graphic power, arising from far-reaching play of the imagination. In thematic invention it is perhaps more strongly stamped with Elgar's originality than any other work. Its whole tone, atmosphere, and colouring are something essentially new in music, the only hint of any other composer's influence occurring in the viola solo, which bears a faint suggestion of Berlioz's "Harold in Italy." But, being a secondary element in the latter part of the Overture, it is to be regarded merely as that kind of reference which in music is as allowable as it is in literature. The *grandioso* theme beginning in A flat minor, which was suggested by the Roman remains of La Turbie, is so striking that it has already acquired a good many nicknames. The "steam-roller" theme, it has been called; elsewhere, the "seven-league-boot" theme, the "Jack the Giant-killer," and, among Germans, the "Siebentöter" theme. In any case it is a most extraordinary piece of musical expression, of a kind scarcely ever foreshadowed by any other composer, except once or twice by Beethoven, who first sought and found the musical symbol of great historic or cosmic forces, or of the emotion stirred in the human consciousness by the play, or after-effects, of such forces. One thing remains to be said about this Overture. The composer's procedure is a compromise between the old procedure by way of thematic development and the newer by way of dramatic suggestion, and he does

not always succeed completely in the fusion of the two, as, for example, Beethoven does in his greater "Leonora"; but here and there he permits the feeling to arise that the one is interfering with the other. In particular, the composition is open to the charge of a certain weakness in thematic development; but that does not prevent it from being, as a whole, a very striking, beautiful, and original tone picture. Dr. Richter's interpretation very finely revealed all the strong points. He saved three minutes of the composer's own time by taking the *vivace* sections at a somewhat quicker tempo. As at Covent Garden last March, Mr. Speelman played the incidental viola solo with marvellous beauty of tone.

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**"The Coronation Ode"**

*October 3,  
1902.*

To the Coronation Ode I listened with great curiosity, remembering the ordinary fate that overtakes patriotic composers and wondering what Sir Edward Elgar would make of the subject.

I find that he has let himself be inspired by the nymph of the same spring whence flowed those two delightful Tommy Atkins marches known as "Pomp and Circumstance." It is popular music of a kind that has not been made for a long time in this country—scarcely at all since Dibdin's time. At least one may say that of the best parts, such as the bass solo and chorus "Britain, ask of thyself," and the contralto solo and chorus "Land of hope and glory." The former is ringing martial music, the latter a sort of Church parade song having the breath of a national hymn. It is the

melody which occurs as second principal theme of the longer "Pomp and Circumstance" march, which I beg to suggest is as broad as "God Save the King," "Rule Britannia," and "See the Conquering Hero," and is perhaps the broadest open-air tune composed since Beethoven's "Freude schöner Götterfunken." Moreover, it is distinctively British—at once beefy and breezy. It is astonishing to hear people finding fault with Elgar for using this tune in two different compositions. I find it most natural in a composer, to whom music is a language in which, desiring to say exactly the same thing again, one has no choice but to say it in the same notes. Besides, such tunes are composed less frequently than once in fifty years. How then can one blame Elgar for not composing two in six months? The chorus enjoyed themselves over it, and so did the audience. As to the sentimental parts of the Ode, frankly I find them uninspired.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

## RICHARD STRAUSS.

“Don  
Quixote”  
Düsseldorf  
May 26,  
1899.

RICHARD STRAUSS is now beyond question the most prominent figure among the younger composers of Germany. He was born at Munich in 1864. At an early age he mastered the various arts of composition and produced works that showed originality and power. Among such early works may be mentioned a String Quartet produced in 1881, and a Symphony first heard in the following year. Within a few years he also composed a Sonata for 'cello, a Serenade for wind instruments, a Concerto for violin, a Concerto for horn, besides songs and pianoforte pieces. These early works show the influence of classical models, and in three cases—the Sonata for 'cello and the Concertos for violin and horn respectively—the influence of Mendelssohn. At a later period Richard Strauss became a disciple of the Wagner-Liszt school and adopted the Symphonic Poem as his principal medium of expression. His fine Sonata in E flat for pianoforte and violin marks the transition stage. In his later phase Strauss appears as a psychologist and an *esprit fin*. His study of Nietzsche's philosophy appears not



only in his "Zarathustra," but in nearly all his "Symphonic Poems." The "Heldenleben" might quite well be labelled with the Nietzschean expression "Der Uebermensch." Strauss thus seems to stand to Nietzsche in something like the relation that Wagner bore to Schopenhauer, and it is a curious point that in each case the musician is found diverging somewhat violently from the taste of his philosophical master. These two philosophers—the only two that have taken a genuine interest in modern music—had both somewhat rudimentary musical taste, though good taste as far as it went. Schopenhauer's preference was for Rossini and Nietzsche's for Bizet, and even as Wagner's style differs *toto cœlo* from Rossini's, so do Strauss's incredible richness of imaginative detail and indifference to rhythmical charm stamp him as something very different from those "Halcyonian" composers whom Nietzsche loved. Strauss is not likely to become popular in England, but two or three of his larger orchestral works, and especially the "Heldenleben," would probably find favour with a section of the English public. To the mandarins and to the majority he is and must remain anathema.

On the third and last day of this Festival Strauss's "Don Quixote" was the work upon which public curiosity was chiefly concentrated. In these "Fantastic Variations" we find the composer once more adopting a style as frankly grotesque as in "Till Eulenspiegel." The long and important introduction stands in a relation to the rest of the work that, so far as I know, is unique. It is a preparation for the principal

theme, successively emphasising all the different kinds of significance supposed to be contained in that theme. First we have a naïve, stilted, and pompous phrase suggesting Don Quixote's absorption in the romances of chivalry. Succeeding passages touch upon the hero's pose of gallantry and the great predominance of imagination over reason which leads him into grotesque adventures. The psychological method of the composer causes him to lay stress on the crisis forming the *point de départ* of Don Quixote's career—a vow of atonement for sins and follies. At last we get the theme in its complete form—a masterpiece of droll characterisation,—and immediately after it the prosaic jog-trot of Sancho Panza. In the first variation a musical element is introduced typifying Don Quixote's feminine ideal—Dulcinea of Toboso. It ends with the windmill incident. One hears the airy swing of the mill-sails, the furious approach of the knight, and his sudden overthrow. Variation No. 2 gives the meeting with the flock of sheep. In the third we have a colloquy between Don Quixote and Sancho, forming an elaborate movement. Next comes the quarrel with the pilgrims, and then the scene in the tavern where Don Quixote undergoes regular initiation into the order of knighthood by keeping guard over his armour all night. No. 6 represents the scene of the peasant woman mistaken for Dulcinea, and No. 7 the ride of the two companions on wooden horses at the fair. Nos. 8 and 9 are concerned with the enchanted boat and the priests mistaken for magicians. No. 10 gives the disastrous fight with the Knight of the Shining Moon. There is

also a finale setting forth the reveries of Don Quixote in his old age, and, last of all, his death. Together with the purely grotesque elements are many touches of wonderful poetic beauty, among which may be mentioned the scene of Don Quixote's midnight watch and, above all, the concluding strain—a sigh of ineffable pathos. On the other hand, it may be urged against the encounter with the flock of sheep that such sounds do not really belong to the domain of music, but rather to that of farm-yard imitations. On the whole, “Don Quixote” strikes me as a less admirable work than the “Heldenleben,” heard on the previous day. The chief feature in the interpretation on Tuesday was the superb rendering, by Professor Hugo Becker, of Frankfort, of the violoncello solo which throughout the work is identified with the person of the titular hero.

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**“Don Juan”  
Preliminary  
Article**

*January 17,  
1901.*

“Don Juan,” though much less eccentric than most of the other “Symphonic Poems” by Richard Strauss, is a typical example of his overwhelmingly rich and effective orchestration. It also exemplifies the peculiar quality of his design, crowded with a Düreresque multiplicity of forms and details, his indifference to symmetry and sustained rhythmical flow, and his systematic endeavour to render the musical medium less vague and more nearly articulate than it ever was before, by enlarging the range of emotional expression, sharpening the instruments of graphic representation, and exploring the mysterious by-

ways of the tone-world. Two imaginary figures that originated in Spanish literature have become the property of mankind. If Don Quixote stands isolated, without any close analogue in the romance of other countries, Don Juan—a somewhat later creation—has much in common with several heroes of Germanic legend, such as Tannhäuser, the Wild Huntsman, and Faust. The closest parallel is between Don Juan and Faust. Both are rebellious spirits; but Faust is ruined by intellectual pride, Juan by sensual passion. As those two kinds of revolt belong to the persistent facts of life, neither Juan nor Faust can ever cease to be interesting. It is quite natural that each of them should be found as the subject of innumerable plays, poems, romances, operas, and ballets. The poetic scheme forming the basis of Richard Strauss's Symphonic Poem is remarkably simple. There is no incident of a definite kind. Don Juan is simply conceived as personifying the most direct and vivid affirmation of what Schopenhauer called the "Will to live." He is enamoured of no one particular woman, but of all the beauty and charm that are in womankind. He has a new kind of love for each kind of beauty. Defying the laws of gods and men with demonic recklessness, he rushes from one enjoyment to another, leaving the trail of weeping victims behind him, while he himself remains the incarnation of gaiety—for remorse is unknown to his heart, and he never keeps up a love affair for a moment longer than it amuses him, nor is he ever at a loss for fresh delights. The music of Strauss plunges us at once into this whirl of intoxicating gaiety. A series of love-episodes ensue, each one

being individualised with amazing subtlety. It is, of course, no new thing for masculine and feminine elements to be clearly distinguishable in music; but the wealth of resource that Strauss shows in these dialogues of dalliance and passion amounts to originality of a very remarkable kind. After several such episodes we have a section symbolising a masked ball that is very strongly stamped with the composer's genius as a musical humourist. In the latter part the spirit of Juan begins to flag. Reminiscences of the foregoing episodes recur with an ominous change in the emotional colouring, and in the end Juan is brought face to face with the black and cold embers of his once so glowing heart.

Beethoven protested against the desecration of music by so scandalous a subject as the Don Juan story. But Mozart produced from the same subject the prize opera of all the ages. It seems, too, that Richard Strauss has made of it his masterpiece.

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**"Don Juan"  
Hallé Concerts**

*January 18,  
1901.*

There can be no gainsaying that Strauss's "Don Juan" Fantasia was received yesterday with much applause. But there is room for doubt whether the excitement that thus found expression was not due rather to the bold and highly picturesque orchestration than to the essentially musical qualities of the work. Richard Strauss postulates an audience of great mental activity. He expects to be understood instantly, instead of letting a musical idea gradually soak in



to the listener's mind, as did the older composers. In order to stimulate such mental activity he constantly deals in strange and violent effects. Hence the irritation of orthodox musicians, who, hearing so much noise and jingle, too rapidly conclude that there is nothing behind; whereas, perhaps, if they listened a little longer, they would begin to discover that Strauss has nearly every gift that was ever in a composer—every gift, that is, except those of a very profound or very sublime order. His power of inventing thematic material to correspond exactly with some peculiar mood of feeling is almost as remarkable as Wagner's. The opening of the "Don Juan" Fantasia is characteristic of that excited condition of mind which is so frequent with the composer. A passage beginning with an upward rush for the strings shows us Juan launched upon his career. Presently a rapid passage, mainly in triplets, for wood, wind and afterwards strings, suggests the eager hunt after enjoyment. Next the impetuous Don is himself characterised. Of these elements a tone-picture of intoxicating gaiety is composed. Then follow the love-episodes, the most beautiful being that in which the oboe has the melody while the lower strings *a divisi* add a rich and sombre accompaniment. The masked ball scene is, in places, a little like a travesty of the "Venusberg" music. This leads to the scene in which Juan is struck down by some calamity—probably a sword-thrust. As he lies stricken, memories of former days crowd back upon him. He has one or two momentary returns of his old fire and energy. But at last his time comes and his soul departs with a shiver. Strauss knows how to make such a scene



marvellously poignant. His most wonderful achievement in this kind is the parting sigh of Don Quixote in the work on that subject. But his treatment of Juan's death is also very powerful.

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"Till  
Eulenspiegel"

*February 14,*  
*1902.*

"Till Eulenspiegel" was the great mediæval *farceur*. His name is well known to students of folk-lore. In Flemish books it figures as Thyl Uylenspiegel, in English as Till Owlglass.

Like other heroes of popular story, Till lies buried in more than one place, each of his tombstones being adorned with his armorial bearings—an owl perched on a hand-mirror. He originated and, for the most part, lived in Westphalia or some country of the Lower Rhine; but he was a migratory person, and one of his best authenticated exploits occurred in Poland, where he had a contest of skill with the King's professional jester. Till is the incarnation of mockery and satire and buffoonery, sometimes witty and usually coarse. He represents a literary development that may be regarded as a kind of Scherzo, after the Andante of the Troubadours, Minnesingers, and other courtly poets—the inevitable reaction of the popular spirit against too much high-flown sentiment. The legendary figure of Till has appealed with the most extraordinary results to that composer who first brought into the domain of the musical art the specific qualities of the South German imagination, as represented, for example, by Holbein, Dürer, and Adam Krafft. Incisive, graphic, ornate, and with

no less unheard-of power of characterisation is Richard Strauss in his music than those other masters in their graphic or plastic achievements. His "Till" reminds one of Dürer's woodcut illustrations to the Apocalypse, but, of course, with colour added. And what colour! and what characterisation in the colour! He controls the orchestra precisely as a good actor the tones of his own voice. He can make it render the finest shades of emotion. "Till" is a musical miracle, unlocking the springs of laughter and of tears at the same time. It enlarges one's notions of what is possible in music, so multifarious and inconceivable are the drolleries, so prodigious the technical audacities which the composer succeeds in justifying. Strauss has, in a sense, revived an art said to have existed in the ancient world—the telling of a story in the form of a dance. From the point where that chromatic jig is heard which symbolises Till wandering about in search of material for the exercise of his talents, the imagination is spell-bound.

Strauss goes a distinct point beyond Wagner in the articulateness of his musical phrases, and he knows better than any other composer that it is the special province of music to express what cannot be expressed in any other way—what is too delicate, or too indelicate, to be expressed in any other way. The most wonderful quality of "Till" is its mediævalism. Listen to those triplets, in four-part chromatic harmony for five solo violins with *sordini*, expressing the agony of terror into which Till is thrown by his own wicked mockery of religion. By such devices the composer conjures up the atmosphere of the age, characterised by

“Furcht auf der Gasse, Furcht im Herzen.” The treatment of the prologue and epilogue, where all that is blackguardly is taken out of Till’s themes now that he has become a story, is of inconceivable felicity.

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“Sehnsucht”

March 18,  
1902.

Richard Strauss’s song “Sehnsucht,” raises a good many interesting questions, such as whether it is not, after all, on harmony rather than on tone-colouring that the essential quality of Strauss’s music depends; whether the eminent South German composer would have found it necessary to be so persistently galvanic in his procedure had he not addressed a musical generation that is too fond of taking opium with Tchaïkovsky; whether it is with Eulenspieglish intent that he sets so many unsophisticated love-song texts to music that betrays contempt of mere lyricism, or whether he genuinely misunderstands the trend of his own talent. Thus one might continue indefinitely; for it is the regular effect of Strauss’s music to crook the listener’s mind into one huge note of interrogation. One further and more important question must, however, be added. Is it Strauss’s deliberate intention to abolish rhythm? Would he add to the well-known saying, “*Am Anfang war der Rhythmus*” the rider “*aber jetzt nicht mehr?*” The over-strongly salted and too highly flavoured “Sehnsucht” was admirably sung, and the fascination of it, not unmixed with horror, was such that it had to be repeated. Nothing about Strauss is more disquieting than

his after-effect on the musical palate. Whether one like his style or not, any other sounds are tame by contrast with it, and a naïf and mild composer such as Grieg (the Hans Andersen of music) seems almost bread-and-butter.

**"Faust  
Symphony"  
Düsseldorf**

*May 23 1902.*

The many violent anti-Lisztians in England should be particularly careful just now to keep their powder dry. They are going to have great trouble with this Eulenspiegelisch Mr. Strauss.

A considerable group of English visitors heard his interpretation of the "Faust Symphonie" on Monday evening, and they are not likely to forget it. Strauss does not belong to the small group of international conductors who can travel from place to place, commanding success everywhere and in music of every style. He has not studied conductor's deportment carefully enough to be generally pleasing to the public. At the same time, his demonic talent comes out clearly enough in his conducting when he has to deal with some work that makes a special appeal to his sympathies. It seems to be his mission to justify Liszt after decades of misunderstanding and detraction. His rendering of the "Faust Symphonie" was simply a gigantic success. The stress and anguish of the first movement, the wonderful sweetness and charm of the Gretchen music, the almost incredible incisiveness and pregnancy of the characteristic music in the Mephistopheles section of the finale, and the unparalleled grandeur of the concluding idea, where the mask is torn from the face of the

“spirit that denies” and the “chorus mysticus” enters with the final stanza, leading up to the crowning idea of the whole drama, “Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan”—these beauties and splendours of the composition were revealed with the infallible touch of a master into whose flesh and blood it long ago passed: and the audience, including even the English visitors, felt it. The “Faust Symphonie” declares the composer to be, in his attitude towards art and life, akin to Hugo, Delacroix, and the other great French Romantics, and the result of that attitude seems more completely happy in music than in painting or literature. It makes one look back with envious longing to the freshness and abounding vitality of those fellows who found such huge relish in the great, broad, fundamental human themes, and resources so vast in the treatment of them. It also provokes bewildered reflections on the complex and enigmatic personality of the composer, who, for all his religious orthodoxy, was a more tremendous revolutionary in art than Wagner, and was, in fact, the originator of certain particularly fruitful Wagnerian ideas. All this and much more is to be learned from the Liszt interpretations of Strauss—a sphinx-like person who, as his abnormally big head sways on the top of his tall and bulky figure, to the accompaniment of fantastic gestures, works up his audience into a sort of phosphorescent fever, here and there provoking a process of sharp self-examination.

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“Tod und  
Verklärung”

*October 17,  
1902.*

It is difficult to make out the prevalent state of mind in this country in regard to Richard Strauss—Richard II., as he is often called in Germany. Of course the upholders of a turnip-headed orthodoxy will not hear of him, any more than they would hear of Richard I. a quarter of a century ago, and he seems to have an irritating effect on all critics, except a certain very small minority in whose temperament there is something giving them the key to some part, at any rate, of Strauss's genius. What irritates the critics is simply the difficulty of finding a formula for Strauss. He has the annoying impertinence not to fit into any of their pigeon-holes. He is enigmatic, Sphinx-like, a complex personality not to be conveniently catalogued. That complex personality we are not here proposing to analyse, but on one point we venture to state a definite opinion. Those who assert that Strauss is a mere eccentric will sooner or later find themselves in the wrong. He has in a few cases played tricks on the public, but he is nevertheless a master-composer, in the full and simple sense of those words—a master-composer just as Mozart was. In “Tod und Verklärung” we find him in a mood of absolute seriousness. The theme is a death-bed scene, the phantasmagoria of a sick brain during the last moments of earthly consciousness, the final struggle with death, and then a wonderful suggestion of reawakening to immortality. The composition is thus, as a German critic has pointed out, the counterpart of Elgar's “Gerontius,” so far as the subject is concerned; but in no other



respect have the two works any similarity. The qualities with which Strauss's name is most commonly associated—audacious and grotesque realism, gorgeous, intoxicating orchestral figuration and colouring—are here completely in abeyance. In the mood of the opening section there is kinship with the third act of "Tristan"—the same hush and oppression of the sick man's lair,—but not in the musical treatment, which with Strauss has much more reference to external detail (*e.g.*, the ticking of the clock) than with Wagner. The introductory notes are full of weird power, and they lead on to some exquisitely pathetic "Seelenmalerei." In the ensuing *agitato* section any listener acquainted with other Symphonic Poems by the same composer—earlier or later—is likely to be surprised at his comparative moderation and restraint in depicting the terrors of the struggle with death. It cannot be denied that Strauss is greatly preoccupied with such ideas. He has set the very article of death to music on at least four different occasions ("Tod und Verklärung," "Don Juan," "Till," and "Don Quixote"). The hanging of "Till" is inconceivably drastic in its realism, and the last sigh of Don Quixote is the most unearthly thing in all music. Don Juan's death is purely *macabre*; but in "Tod und Verklärung" a certain suggestion of the *macabre* gives way to something very different—the suggestion of the soul rising to immortality; and thus is initiated the final section, dominated by the noble and beautiful "transfiguration" theme. Those of the composer's admirers who "always thought he was a heathen Chinnee" may here find matter for searchings of heart. For the thing is too well done not to have been sincerely felt.

“Zarathustra” “Also sprach Zarathustra” (“Thus spake Zarathustra”) is the first work in Strauss’s most advanced manner. It is scored for the following enormous orchestra:—One piccolo and

three flutes; three oboes and one cor anglais; one clarinet in E flat, two clarinets in B flat, and one bass clarinet in B flat; three bassoons and one contrafagotto; six horns in F, four trumpets in C, three trombones, and two bass tubas; kettle drums, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, and glockenspiel; a bell in E; organ, two harps, and the usual bow instruments; and the demands on the *technique* of the performers are as exceptional as the number of instruments employed. It is as striking an example of Dr. Richter’s energy that he should not have shrunk from the task of interpreting so vast and bewildering a score, as it is of his openness of mind that at his age he should have cared to bring forward the most typically advanced and modern of compositions—for that we take Strauss’s “Zarathustra” to be in respect both of subject and treatment. We doubt whether another living musician of anything like Dr. Richter’s age possesses in the same degree that youthful elasticity which can do full justice to the works of a younger generation. Moreover, he is not in any special sense a Straussian. He simply knows, as everyone conversant with the musical affairs of the present day knows, that Strauss is a composer of very great and commanding talent, and he thinks that in such a musical centre as Manchester

his more important works ought to be known. So, in spite of a rather discouraging attitude on the part of the public and an amount of extra trouble that can scarcely be reckoned up, he gives one of them from time to time. It is not Lancashire any more than it is London that, among British musical centres, has displayed the readiest appreciation of Strauss—the great and typical modern. It is the part of the country served by the Scottish Orchestra, where “*Tod und Verklärung*” has before now been chosen for performance at a *plébiscite* concert. This seems very natural, for “*Tod und Verklärung*” is the clearest, simplest, and least heterodox of Strauss’s orchestral works, and much easier to understand at a first hearing than Beethoven’s C minor Symphony. It has, in fact, been recognised as a classic nearly everywhere, though here it still lies under suspicion of being a mere piece of eccentricity. We can only hope that after hearing “*Zarathustra*”—which certainly is rather a large order—some of our conscientious objectors may reconsider their position. The extraordinary thing is that it was better received than the far more generally comprehensible “*Tod und Verklärung*.” This was no doubt, in part, due to sheer astonishment, but also, we believe, to the perception that whatever else there may be in the work there is a certain grandeur of perception. It is scarcely possible to listen in a state of complete indifference to the opening tone-picture of sunrise, with its great booming nature ground-tone, that recalls the Introduction to Wagner’s “*Rheingold*,” and the ringing trumpet harmonies following the three notes of the soulless nature theme. The

plan of the tone-poem that gradually unfolds is one of the clearest. It is on the same plan as the discourse of St. Francis on "La Joie Parfaite," quoted by Sabatier from the "Fioretti," where the holy man, the better to impress upon Brother Leo wherein perfect joy consists, first enumerates a series of things in which it does not consist, and then, having disposed of the erroneous opinions corresponding to various stages of the upward path towards true wisdom, tells us at last what perfect joy is. The wisdom of Zarathustra is, of course, very different from the wisdom of St. Francis, but his method of inculcating it is the same. He, too, has mortified the flesh with the "Hinterweltler" (perhaps "other-worldlings" is the nearest English equivalent), and thrown himself for a change into the vortex of exciting pleasures—the "Freuden und Leidenschaften" he calls them, as who should say the "fruits and passions of youth." It is characteristic that he puts the religion first and the exciting pleasures afterwards. He also "did eagerly frequent doctor and saint and heard great argument," that experience being symbolised by Strauss's "Fugue of Science." But none of these things, he gives us to understand, by emphatic use of the "disgust" theme, is the pearl of great price, or perfect joy, or anything of the sort. The penultimate part of the tone-poem deals with the conversion of Zarathustra into a dancing philosopher—his learning of the great lesson that one must "get rid of heaviness"; and here, of course, the musician is very thoroughly in his element. Very remarkable and surprising is the conclusion. Strauss has declared that the whole composition is

simply his homage to the genius of Nietzsche, but it is impossible to resist the impression that in the manner of the ending he has endeavoured to suggest an improvement on Nietzsche—and he might well be pleased with himself, and so a little overbearing, after producing that “Tanzlied” (a sort of waltz for demigods or “Uebermenschen”), which he has done much better than any other composer that ever lived could have done it. He ends with a night picture in B major against the final notes of which the persistent nature theme in C major once more reasserts itself as a pizzicato bass;—in words, “but you have left the riddle of the painful earth just as much unsolved as it was before, for all your wisdom.” Whether that ending is more to the point than Nietzsche’s own or not, it is really wonderful that musical notes can be made to speak so plainly, and even to say something quite important.

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“Ein  
Heldenleben”  
Liverpool  
Orchestral Soc.

*Feb. 8, 1904.*

We have here to deal with the latest phase of Strauss, and to arrive at anything like a true estimate of “Heldenleben” we have to remember that Strauss is a reformer and the recognised leader of a party which, whether we like it or not, has played and is playing a great part in the world of music. The central principle of the Strauss school rests upon the perfectly correct observation that the general development of music during the last two centuries shows continual progress towards greater articulateness, and that



there is no reason for regarding that progress as having reached its final stage with Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner. Brahms and the neo-classicists were on a wrong track, they consider, and it is the mission of Strauss and his connection to bring the art back into the paths of true progress. This indicates the sense in which Strauss is called a reformer. It is the usual fate of reformers to overshoot the mark; Mr. Weingartner thinks that Strauss has done so very seriously in his last three Symphonic Poems—"Zarathustra," "Don Quixote," and "Heldenleben,"—and I am constrained to give in my adherence to Mr. Weingartner's view. In each of the three works named there is much that only genius could have produced, but also something that is alien to genius. The perpetration of deliberate cacophony for a symbolical purpose we first encounter in "Zarathustra," where it is done in a tentative and restrained manner and on a very small scale. In "Don Quixote" the same procedure is used on a larger scale and with much greater boldness, and in "Heldenleben" it has given rise, in the "battle" section, to an extended movement that I can only call an atrocity. That section displays the composer in a mood of unparalleled extravagance. Taking harmony in the most extended sense that is possible, it still remains a thing outside the limits of which Strauss's battle-picture lies. It therefore fails altogether, I suggest, to carry on the progress of music towards greater articulateness. It is not music, and does nothing whatever for music. It is a monstrous excrescence and blemish—a product of musical insanity, bearing no trace whatever of that genius which produced the lovely and perfect "Tod und



Verklärung" and the superbly racy and pithy orchestral Scherzo "Till Eulenspiegel."

The expression of such views carries with it the terrible consequence of being identified with "The Adversaries," whom Strauss, disarming criticism by a novel method, symbolises in the awful strains quoted as examples 4 and 5 in Mr. Newman's programme. But one must testify according to one's convictions, and I confess that I cannot be reconciled to section 4 of "Heldenleben," and find in section 5 a considerable element of merely curious mystification. The principle of "horizontal listening," which the whole-hog-going Straussians recommend, does not help me. Horizontal listening becomes, beneath the murderous cacophony of that battle section, simply supine listening.

In other parts of the work there is much that is thoroughly worthy of Strauss. Perhaps the most attractive thing of all is the violin solo representing the feminine element in the hero's life-experience. The wayward emotion of that part is rendered by the composer with a truly magical touch that shows with what wonderful freshness he conceives the task of such character-delineation in tones. How different from Chopin's princesses is the Straussian lady! How infinitely more subtle, varied, interesting, and psychologically true! The hero, too, is powerfully sketched, though throughout the section specially devoted to him one is conscious of the gigantic rather than the heroic. Most of the thematic invention is telling—perhaps more so than in "Zarathustra,"—and the "Seelenmalerei" in the love music and afterwards in the renunciation music is all very finely done. Even the drastic musical satire of

the "Adversaries" is acceptable enough in its earlier phases. It is the polyphony in the sections of storm and stress that goes wrong. The subject of the work as a whole has the merit of general intelligibility. But the composer identifies the hero much too insistently with himself; nor does he maintain the consistency of tone that is proper to a work of art. If sections 3, 4, 5 and 6 carried out the promise of sections 1 and 2 we should have a sort of gigantic Gulliverian humoresque. But with section 3 a new atmosphere is conjured up, and henceforth the work gravitates backwards and forwards between two irreconcilable elements—the one drastic, sarcastic, and cataplastic, the other at first subtle, sinuous, and soulful, and afterwards turning towards a mood of religious exaltation and austere contemplation.

Quartet in  
C Minor

*March 10,  
1904.*

The case of Strauss is certainly an awkward one for the believers in the neo-classicism of Brahms. In such works as the Quartet, op. 13, and the violin Sonata, op. 18, written twenty or more years ago, he declares himself an absolute Brahmsian, worshipping before all things the well-constructed musical sentence, using the extended harmonies and profuse figuration of the modern technique to express emotions that have but little individuality and are merely typical of the thorough-going German sentimentalist. Indeed, he here shows himself a better Brahmsian than Brahms, avoiding all his model's worst faults, such as his groping and fumbling, his muttering and

whining, and only sentimentalising in quite a healthy sort of way and with a flow so abundant and easy that to find fault would seem intolerant. Yet, with all these wonderful qualifications for a great Brahmsian career, Strauss would have none of it, except during his most youthful period. For many years now he has been displaying utter contempt of the well-constructed musical sentence; also of German sentimentalism and of all the other traditional subjects of musical eloquence. As an orchestral composer, he has pursued a path of adventurous hardihood scarcely paralleled in the history of art, and he looks back to his Brahmsian chamber-music as belonging to a fledgeling state of his talent. As it is not open to the Brahmsians to say that those early works prove Strauss's incompetence as a composer of the orthodox kind, the only thing left for them to say is that the chamber-music is much the best of his whole output. Sooner or later we shall doubtless begin to hear that, and in the meantime those who like the early works can play them or listen to them with the comforting assurance that the composer would not object, inasmuch as he has himself quite recently taken part in public performances of them. The Quartet—which Dr. Brodsky and his usual associates, assisted by Mr. Isidor Cohn, played yesterday—might rank as the mature work of anyone but Strauss. It is youthful, relatively to the composer, in the emotional basis of the music; but not in the workmanship, and least of all in the invention, which has all the pith and weight commonly telling of ripe experience. In short, it is an extremely good Quartet of the orthodox kind—one may even say, one of the best existing

works for pianoforte and three bow instruments. The Andante is not quite such a marvel as the slow movement of the violin Sonata, but it is very nearly as good in invention and quite as good in its adaptation to the medium—that is, to the particular group of instruments. The Scherzo is as pithy as the Andante is glowingly sentimental, and the framing-in movements are magnificently done. Thoroughly adequate was the rendering of this immensely interesting composition. The tempo in the Scherzo was faster than the composer's own; but, as it is not possible for him to keep up the technique of a solo pianist, he may possibly avoid a very rapid tempo for that reason. Mr. Cohn brought out all the passage work clearly enough, though the rapid tempo caused a certain dryness in the string tone. The other movements were satisfactory from every point of view. It is interesting to note in this Quartet an early example of Strauss's tendency to associate a certain mood with a certain key. A contrasting section with an easier flow he assigns to B major, and throughout the recurrences the original key assignment is preserved in a manner very unlike the procedure of the older composers. Throughout the work the connection between tonality and emotional import is preserved in detail, and we here note a further development of the principle which prompted Beethoven to throw his prevalently dark and mysterious Symphony of Fate into C minor and his Rhythmic or Dancing Symphony into A major, but which, from him, met with no more than a very broad kind of recognition.

## CHAPTER IX.

## CHAMBER MUSIC.

Dvoràk  
 Quintet in  
 A Major.

*February 2,*  
*1897.*

Music for pianoforte, combined with two or more bow instruments, is usually constituted on anything but democratic principles, the percussion instrument standing to the others in very much the same relation as Jupiter to his satellites. But the splendid quintet by Dvoràk given last night forms an honourable exception to this principle, the Bohemian composer's well-known preference for bow instruments having apparently counteracted the usual tendency to make the pianoforte part too prominent. Throughout the quintet there is an endless wealth and fertility of beautiful ideas. The opening allegro is based on two main elements which form an effective contrast, the one moving prevalently in syncopated double time, and the other approaching the character of a tarantelle. The pianoforte part is sometimes of independent interest, and sometimes consists of beautiful accompanying passages constructed from chords in extended position. The second movement bears the name "Dumka," which, we believe, was first used as the name of a musical movement by Dvoràk, or at any rate first became familiar to the world in general through his works. It is



derived from a Slavonic root meaning "to think," and may be taken as something like the equivalent of "meditation." There are several peculiarly interesting and charming movements in the works of the Bohemian composer bearing this name, and that which occurs in the quintet is one of the best. It is in the relative minor of the opening key, and exhibits the composer as a poet of the same sort as Burns—at once sturdy in bearing and delicate in feeling. Here and there the pianoforte part conveys a suggestion of Chopin; but the courtly sentiment of Chopin is soon merged in a broader and more full-blooded vein of feeling. The thematic material is remarkably varied and episodic, while the Scherzo—called, as in other Bohemian compositions "Furiant"—is compact and free from any trace of the rambling tendency. The finale is dominated by a dance theme in double time of enormous energy and vivacity.

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**Dvorák**  
**Quartet, Op. 96**

*December 6,*  
*1900.*

The Op. 96 Quartet might almost as well be called "From the New World" as the Symphony. Whether it was written during the composer's stay in America we do not know, but it is certainly an outcome of his American experiences no less than the "New World" symphony. All the themes of both those works are idealised Negro or Red Indian melodies, and though the results may not be in the Quartet quite so wonderfully felicitous as in the Symphony, they are fine enough to make it a most interesting feature in the music of



the wonderful Bohemian composer's American period. That music has taught some of us a rather important lesson. The value of folk-melody has long been recognised, but until these works by Dvoràk became known it was pretty generally thought that Negro tunes formed an exception to the principle that all sincere, unsophisticated, and original musical utterance has artistic value. Dvoràk has taught us the danger of regarding any natural thing as common or unclean. He has shown that Negro melody may give rise to beautiful works of art no less than Irish, Hungarian, or Scandinavian melody. Dvoràk is the most impossible to classify of all composers. He is naïf and yet a master of complex and ingenious design; a scorner of scholastic device and at the same time a successful worker in the classical forms; the most original of the composers who became known during the latter half of the 19th century, yet suspected, on occasion, of the most barefaced plagiarism. It is hard to say whether his absolute musical invention; his skill, taste, and resource in laying out for single stringed instruments, or his ear for orchestral colouring is the most remarkable faculty. He is the musician who seems to have learned but little from text-books and professors, and yet, by a continual series of miracles, he avoids all the pitfalls that beset the path of the unlearned composer. He is never at a loss—never does anything feeble or ineffective,—but again and again overwhelms and delights us with his inexhaustible flow of racy and full-blooded melody and with his splendid handling of whatever instrument, or group of instruments, he may choose to handle.

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**Beethoven**  
**Razoumoffsky**  
**Quartet, No. 3**

*December 5,*  
*1901.*

The third Razoumoffsky Quartet stands among Beethoven's chamber compositions very much as the C minor Symphony among his orchestral works. To define the qualities in virtue of which these two cognate works appeal so very strongly and directly to the imagination is a matter of great difficulty. They belong to the same period; and, utterly dissimilar as they are in form and detail, they are akin to one another in spirit. Both reveal the composer during that short but golden prime of his artistic life when he had done with technical experiments; and when that austere indifference to mere sensuous beauty of sound, which in course of time his deafness inevitably brought, had not yet begun. Hence these works, though they fall far short of the exaltation, intensity, and rugged grandeur of many third-manner compositions, are more perfectly balanced. They are also entirely free from certain perverse—one may almost say misanthropic—elements which are a stumbling-block in much of Beethoven's music. Such is the felicity of the invention that each new thematic element strikes the ear like a sort of revelation. Nowhere is there an overlong development or anything that bewilders or alienates. The Andante quasi Allegretto of the Quartet reveals the composer in an extremely rare mood. The delicate romance of it recalls the slow movement of the Schumann Quintet, however much more profound Beethoven may be. The harmony is full of dream-like beauty, and here and there accents of extraordinarily eloquent appeal give that impression (so frequent with Wagner) of music trembling on the

verge of articulate speech. A case in point is the recurring G flat in the viola part in bars 8, 9, and 10 after the second repeat. The pizzicato bass is another feature that irresistibly arrests attention. The unparalleled delights of this enchanting work were brought home to the audience by a performance which was not only masterly but was stamped by peculiar felicity. Everything in the marvellous Allegretto was thrown into a kind of delicate relief, and the fugal finale was given with the utmost animation and perfection of detail.

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**Bach**  
**Concerto in**  
**D Minor**  
*January 15,*  
*1903.*

The association of Lady Hallé and Dr. Brodsky in Bach's Concerto for two violins yesterday brought together by far the largest audience ever yet seen at these concerts. The D minor, with two solo parts, is doubtless the finest on the whole of Bach's violin Concertos. The Largo, cast in a mould that the composer used more than once, obviously takes the first place among movements of the kind, in virtue of stately magnificence paired with a certain royal mildness and amiability of expression. Other examples may be deeper or more poignant in feeling, but none other is so richly and perfectly organised in structure or so sweetly benign in expression. The two solo instruments are treated by the composer on a footing of absolute equality, and the manner in which his intentions were yesterday realised by the two masterly performers was above praise. Why (one is likely to ask on hearing such a performance) did a composer, who could make a couple of instruments

sing so sweetly and graciously and in a manner so perfectly adapted to their proper genius, very frequently force the singing voice to follow a crabbed line, instrumental rather than vocal in character? In the more vivacious movements preceding and following the Largo nothing could have been finer than the delicate interplay of the two well-matched solo parts, and the whole composition lost little or nothing by the rendering of the accompaniment on a pianoforte instead of the small orchestra for which it was originally scored. As pianoforte accompanist Miss Olga Neruda showed unfailing discretion, and so contributed not a little to the exquisite impression produced by the whole work.

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**Beethoven**  
**B Flat**  
**Major**  
**Quartet**

In Beethoven's B flat major Quartet—the last of the third volume—the intricate lines of the composition were brought out with admirable unanimity of purpose, perfection of *ensemble* never once being lost amid the utmost fire and freedom of the execution in the rapid parts. The Quartet, which occupies quite forty-five minutes in performance, is remarkable for an opening movement in which adagio and allegro sections alternate with wayward frequency, for the curious fourth movement in a sort of Ländler rhythm, and for the Cavatina in E flat preceding the Finale. It is capricious and multifarious, but has neither the abstruseness nor the occasional violence of the later Beethoven as revealed in the last Quartets and Sonatas.

**Tchaïkovsky**  
**Quartet in**  
**D Major**

Tchaïkovsky's first Quartet is chiefly remembered in connection with the Andante, which makes a peculiar appeal to the imagination. Though the thematic basis is evidently derived from folk-music, and the tones of the muted instruments are such as one associates with "soft Lydian airs" that merely play upon the senses without further significance, there is in this movement a strange mystical exaltation that is not often met with in Tchaïkovsky. It sounds like a dream of the shepherds who watched their flocks by night and heard the angels sing, or an illustration of some kindred theme in which a homely and pastoral note is associated with devout and joyous feeling. It is the movement that so greatly moved Count Tolstoy when, in company with the composer, he heard a performance of it, also led by Dr. Brodsky. The rest of this beautiful and zestful work causes one to wonder how the composer was able so early in his career to make stringed instruments speak with such free, ready, and natural eloquence.

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**Tchaïkovsky**  
**Trio in**  
**A Minor**

*February 26,*  
*1903.*

Most astonishing are the comments that one hears and reads occasionally on such "In Memoriam" pieces as Tchaïkovsky's noble Trio, written in honour of Nicolas Rubinstein — brother of the more famous Anton and a pianist of nearly equal eminence. The psychological basis of this Trio is of exceptional clearness; it is probably clearer than in any other composition of



similar extension. Yesterday, Mr. Siloti played the pianoforte part at these concerts for the second if not for the third time. Frequenters have therefore enjoyed unusually good opportunities of becoming acquainted with the music, which we regard as on the whole the best example of Tchaïkovsky's chamber composition. As in Schubert's "Wanderer Fantasie," the centre of the whole is the theme of the second movement—a beautiful and expressive strain that, in the composer's imagination, evidently symbolised the personality of his lost friend. The ensuing Variations—which include a waltz, a mazurka, and others that are anything but sombre in character—range back over scenes and memories connected with that personality, the composer now giving himself up to lively characterisation, and now thrown back into an elegiac mood by the returning consciousness of the friend's death. Occasionally the two moods are mingled, as in that part of the waltz where the dainty dalliance of the pianoforte part is accompanied by the tragic variant of the central theme in the strings. The opening movement, "pezzo elegiaco," is dominated by that tragic variant which, at the very outset, is given out with mighty eloquence by the richest tones of the 'cello—a wailing complaint that recurs in many different forms and informs all three movements in one way or another. Analysing the composition, therefore, not with reference to musical technicalities, but psychologically, we find it to consist of three main elements:—(1) The composer's affection for his friend and grief at his loss; (2) biographical reminiscences and reflections thereon; (3) the funeral panegyric. To some extent these elements



are intermingled throughout the work; but they dominate the respective movements as here numbered, so that, broadly speaking, one may call the first movement "lament," the second "recollections," the third "eulogy." In all important respects the Trio strikes us as thoroughly original, though in a few superficial matters the composer seems to take hints from certain predecessors. Probably the "Wanderer Fantasie" influenced the general design to some extent; the opening of the Finale suggests the corresponding part of Schumann's "Etudes Symphoniques" by its rhythm and atmosphere, and the short "funeral march" section at the end contains an obvious reference to Chopin. One can scarcely hear a better rendering than Mr. Siloti's of the pianoforte part, which is throughout of paramount importance. Like Dr. Brodsky, Mr. Siloti was an intimate friend of the composer, and as he is also an acknowledged master of pianoforte technique and a highly accomplished musician, his Tchaïkovsky interpretations have a certain authority. Moreover, no living instrumentalist can charm a melody into life in a more suave and natural manner, and the lines of a composition always fall into their proper place in his renderings. Dr. Brodsky, always at his best in the music of his famous compatriot and friend, gave a most eloquent rendering of the violin part, and he was well matched by Mr. Fuchs, who, as before, brought out the superb opening theme with amazing warmth and breadth of style, and gave all the rest of his part in a manner worthy of that fine entry.

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César Franck  
Quintet in  
F Minor

*December 12,  
1903.*

The Quintet, for pianoforte and strings in F minor and major, is a typical example of the composer's profound learning and immense technical mastery, of his lofty ideal as a musical artist, and of his quite marvellous originality. Judging by such a composition, one would hardly claim the gift of melodic charm for César Franck. He has little or no lyricism, and he seems to be chiefly interested in delivering music from the bondage of the tonic and dominant system, while calling upon each instrument for what is most characteristic in its technical resource. He is thus as far removed as possible from Grieg and the song-and-dance men of recent time. He is a great master of form, but he dramatises the chamber-music forms very much as Beethoven dramatized the symphony, reconciling the claims of structure and emotion with the touch of unmistakable genius. The great Quintet is written for performers whose technique is subject to no limitations. Each part is intensely alive, and at many points the listener's imagination is carried into regions never before opened up. The music proves that the composer understood his medium with extraordinary thoroughness. Some of his audacious progressions, his persistent reduplications, and his rushing unison passages one might, at first blush, call orchestral, yet more careful observation quickly convinces one that they are not orchestral, but that the special kind of eloquence in the music belongs essentially to the particular combination for which it was written. The key system is disconcerting at first. The composer

seems to insist that two chords so unlike tonic and dominant as F major and D flat minor (if anyone thinks there is no such key he cannot have studied César Franck) will do just as well for the main props of an extended composition; and he has all the best of the argument. The technical interest of the work is of the keenest from beginning to end; but the poetic interest seems to develop slowly, the imaginative play being nowhere as definite as in the finale, which begins with strong passages of extreme nervous agitation and culminates in a tumultuous *dénoûment* with strong reiterated insistence on the two chords afore-mentioned, above which the strings rush towards their point of repose in a unison of unparalleled energy and breadth. The subtle and heavy emotion of the slow movement reminds one of Maeterlinck. César Franck (1822—90) was a Liégeois who migrated to Paris, where he became the founder of the young French school—that school of which Mr. Vincent d'Indy is now the principal ornament. Another follower, much less truly distinguished than d'Indy but better known in this country, is Gabriel Fauré. Franck is the only great composer that Belgium has produced in modern times. The task of interpreting the wonderful Quintet was one of the most formidable that Dr. Brodsky and his associates ever took in hand. But they were equal to the occasion. With such a past master as Mr. Busoni at the pianoforte there could be no uncertainty as to the interpretation, and the immensely difficult string parts were rendered with that repose and sureness of touch which alone can make a great and complex composition intelligible.

## CHAPTER X.

## PIANO-PLAYING.

Reisenauer

*February 13,*  
*1896.*

THE reception of Mr. Alfred Reisenauer by the large audience in the Gentleman's Hall yesterday afternoon was marked by considerable reserve. Not once during the recital was there any display of enthusiasm. Yet it cannot be said that the performance fell short of Mr. Reisenauer's great reputation. In his rendering of Schumann's "Carneval" not a point was missed, and the "Paganini" intermezzo, occurring in the middle of the slow waltz, gave a foretaste of the quite extraordinary technical powers which were more fully displayed later on. The "Davidsbündler" finale was played with less noise and more subtlety than is usually bestowed upon this curious march, with the Grossvaterstanz creeping in unobserved, much as the "Marseillaise" creeps into the "Faschingschwank in Wien" by the same composer. In certain numbers the pianist showed a tendency to prefer pieces of a secondary and almost trivial character such as the "Rondo à Capriccio" to which Beethoven has given the whimsical sub-title "Rage over the lost penny stormed out in a Caprice." Not that this work is

altogether frivolous. As in almost all Beethoven's music, the working-out sections contain much that is beautiful and interesting; but the opening theme is quite as bald as the *motif* of Haydn's "Surprise" symphony. In the first part of the programme—that is, down to the end of the Beethoven selections—there were comparatively few indications of the pianist's true calibre. But in Liszt's transcription of the "Forelle" Mr. Reisenauer began to reveal some of those marvels of which he and perhaps one other living pianist have the monopoly. That interminable trill, with the song *motif* freely and expressively played by the same hand first below the trill and then above it, was a thing to be remembered. There was not the least trace of those licences which even first-rate players commonly allow themselves in order to facilitate such manœuvres. To the ear the effect was absolutely that of three independent hands. The "Erlkönig" transcription, on the other hand, was much less impressive. It was performed with an exaggerated *tempo rubato*, and was altogether too noisy. Of the Chopin Nocturne in D flat as rendered yesterday afternoon it is difficult to speak in measured terms. Mr. Reisenauer seems to be pretty generally put down by amateurs as wanting in "soul." But if so, it must surely be admitted that he gets on extraordinarily well without one. Anyhow, soul or no soul, his rendering of the Nocturne was a revelation. In the midst of an almost nebulous pianissimo the parts were still differentiated with perfect mastery, and altogether a science of tone-gradations was displayed that is probably unique. Not a lurking beauty in the composition escapes



his research or exceeds his powers of interpretation. For the concluding number Liszt's "Hungarian Fantasia" was chosen, and this piece again fell totally flat on the greater part of the audience, possibly owing to want of familiarity with the Hungarian style. For this Fantasia is based on Hungarian popular songs, and decorated with passages that are a sort of glorified imitation of an Hungarian improvisatore's performance on the "cembalo." The song-themes are some of the most beautiful and interesting to be found in all Liszt's Rhapsodies and Fantasias, especially the first, which, in Korbay's edition, is set to the words "They have laid down him dead upon the black-draped bier," and the wonderful "Crane" song, which colours all the latter part of the Fantasia. The difficulties of the piece are some of the most heart-breaking to be found anywhere in the literature of the instrument.

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**Moszkowski** To those who already knew Mr. Moszkowski as a composer it must have been interesting  
*November 18,* yesterday to make his acquaintance  
*1898.* as a pianist. His playing is the exact counterpart of his composing. It is brilliant, ingenious, elegant. It shows a knowledge of pianoforte technique so consummate that the listener is apt to be completely dazzled and to forget that our old friend the pianoforte is capable of other kinds of eloquence besides the eloquence of technical display. At the same time, it is not at all our intention to

speaking slightly of Mr. Moszkowski's technical display. Though not the highest thing in music, technique is a very important thing, and, when carried to such a pitch of excellence, has a kind of self-sufficient beauty that may be compared to the lustre of pearls and diamonds. Perhaps it does not mean anything; but it is beautiful, cheering, enlivening. It raises the spirits somewhat like champagne, but better than champagne, and it has all the arrogance and costly unreason that are so fascinating in fine jewellery, in common with which it seems to convey a kind of magnificent protest against matter-of-fact and gloom. The wonderful charm of Mr. Moszkowski's composing and playing depends, further, on the fact that he attempts nothing but what he can do to perfection. He knows well enough that there was a Beethoven and a Brahms, for whom music was the expression of profound poetic ideas. But such ideas are not his affair. He leaves them frankly alone, in the well-founded confidence that almost anything in the way of an idea will serve his most entertaining purposes. The Concerto played yesterday is a perfectly characteristic work. Completely devoid of originality as to material, it is nevertheless put together with an unflinching sense of style, and everything is so adorned and so laid out for the solo instrument that there is not a dull moment from beginning to end. If only as a compendium of all the most telling musical effects that are absolutely peculiar to the pianoforte, the Concerto is likely to be remembered. The two Mazurkas that were played in the second part of the concert were interesting examples of that form which apparently no

composers but those of Slavonic descent can handle successfully. It may be hoped that anyone who listened to them attentively will have grasped the rudimentary point that there is nothing in common between that clumsy dance of Western Europe called the Polka Mazurka and the elaborate figure dance the music of which has been so wonderfully idealised in the Mazurkas of Chopin, Tchaïkovsky, Wiéniawski, Moszkowski, and Scharwenka.

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**Busoni**

*December 23,  
1898.*

Of the four principal pianoforte styles—the Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, and Liszt styles—Mr. Busoni has shown himself a past-master. It has been said that these four are the only genuine pianoforte styles. But if there is a fifth having typical originality distinct from all others, it is the Brahms style, and in that style Mr. Busoni was heard for the first time yesterday evening. His interpretation of Brahms's first Concerto was no less masterly than his Bach, Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt renderings. The work is one of exceptional importance. Written when the composer was only twenty-five years of age, and almost entirely unknown, and proving, when first produced at Leipsic, with the composer himself as soloist, a dead failure, it nevertheless was, like Carlyle's "French Revolution," the first work showing the author to be a genuine and original man of genius. It shows him deliberately rejecting all that was traditionally connected with the idea of a work in "concert style," affording to the

soloist none of the conventional opportunities for display, demanding from him the mastery of an enormously difficult technique, full of double-note passages, full of heavy and exhausting reduplications; demanding also exceptional tact, intelligence, and presence of mind such as are only to be found in a few players of the very first rank. The music of the first movement is of profoundly sinister and tragic import, portraying the rage, grief, and unrest in some struggle of the heroic soul. It has nothing entertaining and nothing to propitiate superficial taste. No wonder it was a failure at Leipsic in 1859, when that centre of enlightenment was given up to the Mendelssohn cult! After the composer himself, the first pianist to take up the Concerto was Hans von Bülow, who with a performance at a Philharmonic Concert in Berlin won early recognition of its surpassing merit. Other performers who contributed towards the success of the work with the world in general were Madame Schumann and Mr. D'Albert. At the present time it may be doubted whether there is any better exponent of it than Mr. Busoni. What a German writer has called the "heaven-storming" first motive was delivered in a manner that showed perfect grasp of its poetic import, and the tragic eloquence of the ensuing development was never marred either by any sort of technical fault or by inappropriate expression. The "Benedictus" forming the slow movement is fraught with that profound religious feeling the musical expression of which has been accomplished only by Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. It was no less perfectly rendered than the opening movement, and the concluding Rondo

was played with appropriate breadth, energy, and mastery of heavy and intricate passages. Afterwards another work for the same instrumental combination was played, namely, Liszt's "Spanish Rhapsody," which Mr. Busoni has treated very much as Liszt himself treated the "Wanderer Fantasie" of Schubert, making an arrangement on the concerto principle, with a part for pianoforte and orchestral accompaniments. The Rhapsody is put together on the same principle as the Hungarian Rhapsodies, having majestic motives in the first part, and afterwards dance themes with variations and ornamentations in the transcendental manner peculiar to Liszt. Mr. Busoni's orchestration is all very clever and telling, and in playing the solo part, which is brilliant beyond all description, he, as it were, came down from the pedestal of seriousness and showed that he also can, on occasion, be simply entertaining. As an extra piece without orchestra, Mr. Busoni played Liszt's "Campanella"—probably the most catchy and difficult concert study in existence. The almost incredible brilliancy with which it was performed seemed to leave the audience half dazed and wholly captivated.

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**Busoni**

*November 25,  
1904.*

The concert was remarkable for one of Mr. Busoni's meteoric appearances, the special function of which, in the order of nature, seems to be to throw critics into a state of utter confusion and bewilderment. He has been more frantically praised and more severely blamed than any other



pianist of the present day, and he never fails to justify both praise and blame. He is the modern Sphinx among executive musicians, just as Strauss is among composers. Nothing is certain but his matchless technical power and the uncanny force of his own individuality that, without misconception or inadequate conception, still does violence to every composer, by a sort of inner necessity. Every accusation except that of dulness or feebleness has been brought against Mr. Busoni, and with justice. Yet he can well afford to smile at his critics; for the fury of one is as eloquent a testimony as the rapture of another to his prodigious faculty of stimulation. Most of the fault-finding is a covert expression of rage at the writer's hopeless inability to estimate so prodigious a talent or to guess what it will "do next." Henselt's Concerto, hackneyed in Germany but almost unknown in England, was his accompanied piece yesterday. It is the most considerable work of that curious composer, who made a great reputation as a pianist though he scarcely ever played in public, and some reputation as a composer though he never did anything more original than the pianoforte Etude "Si oiseau j'étais," and for the most part rested satisfied with giving enfeebled reproductions of Chopin's ideas thinly disguised by arpeggio accompaniments in extended harmonies and ornamental passages in double notes. In a few points, such as the use of *martellato* octaves and chord passages, he had a more modern technique than Chopin's; but there is no justification for his compositions except good laying out for the instrument. From beginning to end one finds him cultivating the same kind of

mild and voluminous euphony. Mr. Busoni played the three movements in his customary style, solving all the technical problems that they present rather more intelligently than anyone else. His unaccompanied solos were, first, two astonishingly ingenious Preludes constructed on themes of chorales by Bach, which are treated as *canti fermi*, and accompanied by passages in florid counterpoint, having the character of an *obbligato*. The theme of the first was "Sleepers, wake," and of the second the chorale known in this country as "Luther's Hymn." The third piece was Liszt's seldom-heard transcription of Beethoven's "Adelaide."

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### Borwick

February 10,  
1899.

Among all kinds of solo playing it is pianoforte playing, the high standard of which is specially characteristic of our age. The violin was perfected in the seventeenth century, and, though the technique of the violin has been further developed in comparatively recent times by Paganini and others, there has not been during the nineteenth century any other advance in a particular kind of musical performance at all comparable with the advance in pianoforte playing, which, apart from improvements in the construction of the instrument, is generally attributed to the genius of Liszt. It is sometimes forgotten that Liszt did not stand quite alone. He was the most brilliant pupil of a certain school, namely the Czerny school. But Czerny, though probably the greatest of all pianoforte pedagogues, does not

stand quite alone as the father of modern playing. There was another great pedagogue with an independent system, namely Friederick Wieck, whose most brilliant pupil was his daughter Madame Schumann. The modern art of pianoforte playing may be traced back to one or other of those two remarkable teachers, Czerny and Wieck. The most famous representative of the Czerny-Liszt school at the present day is Mr. Paderewski, and the most famous representative of the other—the Wieck-Schumann school is Mr. Borwick. For a long time it was supposed that no member of the English-speaking races was capable of taking rank among first-rate solo-players, and it is therefore cheering to find Mr. Borwick—a true-born Britisher—holding the position that he now holds. For his first piece Mr. Borwick chose, appropriately enough, the Schumann Concerto for pianoforte, which Rubinstein considered a no less happy inspiration than Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto. It is the most important of all Schumann's works for pianoforte, and Mr. Borwick, as a pupil of the Schumann school is, of course, completely in his element when playing it. Yesterday he seemed thoroughly well-disposed, and he played the whole work with admirable purity of style and insight into its delicate ingenuities and romantic beauties. On his second appearance Mr. Borwick played a Ballade by Grieg in the form of fifteen variations on a Norwegian air. The air is plaintive and pretty, and in the harmonization is strongly stamped with the composer's individuality. Some of the variations, too, contain examples of graceful movement, but there is not much more to be said for them. They are not for a moment to be com-

pared with the typical modern works in variation form, such as Mendelssohn's "Variations Sérieuses," Schumann's "Etudes Symphoniques," or the variations on a chorale of Haydn by Brahms. The one really fine work of considerable scope for piano-forte by Grieg is the Concerto. All that was possible, however, to be made of the Ballade was made of it by Mr. Borwick.

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Siloti

*March 9,  
1900.*

Of Svendsen, the contemporary Scandinavian whose name stood first on yesterday's programme, we know very little. Until yesterday we had heard nothing of his but the familiar Romance for violin. The first hearing of his Moorish "Legend" for orchestra left an impression of sweetness and picturesque charm, but also of a talent scarcely equal to the conception and laying out of extended orchestral works. As painters sometimes say, the interest of the picture was literary rather than artistic. It was nice to read the pretty story in the programme to the accompaniment of the pretty music going on in the orchestra. But whether the music by its own eloquence could have roused the desire to know what was the imaginative or narrative basis of the design in tones is doubtful. Except for a short section at the end, containing some slight suggestions of development, the composition is almost entirely arabesque work, which is perhaps an appropriate arrangement, the subject being Moorish. The amazing double power that Liszt possessed of

translating from orchestra to pianoforte and from pianoforte to orchestra was certainly never matched in any other mortal. Both processes he performed with consummate ability. Mr. Siloti rendered the solo part with the restraint and the mature mastery of his resources that are characteristic of him. He tears no passion to tatters; he does not play "in Ercles' vein"; the tricks of the "Oktavenbändiger" delight him not; nor does he tickle and paw the notes in the velvety-ineffable style. Mr. Siloti is so considerate as not to obliterate the composer in any way. There is a certain largeness and gentleness in his manner. His technical power is unlimited, but he uses no more of it than is necessary to bring out the composition, and with regard to tone-gradations, pedalling, and the entire management of the pianoforte—as medium of musical expression, not of acrobatic display—one may say that "what there is to know, he knows it." Among distinguished pianists of the day there is perhaps none other whose style is so good a model for learners. Many other pianists have great powers, but nearly every other has some frightful fault, whereas Mr. Siloti has no serious fault. He is simple, equable, gentlemanly, masterly. He seeks not to dazzle, to bewilder, to impose, to appal, to petrify—but simply to convince. He *brings out the music* written by the composer, and that is what a pianist should do. The group of Russian pieces played by Mr. Siloti on his second appearance we thought, on the whole, very charming, especially the Caprice by Arensky. The concluding piece by Rubinstein was not quite so interesting, but it gave the performer his opportunity of treating the audience to that "rampage" which is con-



sidered the only proper conclusion to a group of pianoforte solos; and it had, at any rate, the advantage of not being hackneyed.

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**Rosenthal**

November 23,  
1900.

An exceedingly remarkable performance of Schumann's Pianoforte Concerto was given by Mr. Rosenthal and the orchestra. In no other performance that we remember was the balance between orchestra and solo part so well preserved. Mr. Rosenthal played with his usual perfection of technical mastery; his phrasing was beautifully intelligent, and the distinction of his style was to be noted no less in the homely sweetness and graceful fancy of the Intermezzo than in the rich and complex Allegro. Again, in the finale, his marvellous accuracy and fine phrasing enabled the hearers to enjoy every *nuance* of the composition, notwithstanding a tendency to hurry that was perceptible at certain points. The tremendous "Don Juan" fantasia, for pianoforte alone, gave Mr. Rosenthal an opportunity of exhibiting his technical powers in one of the most audacious *bravura* compositions that exist. In many persons the fine frenzy that rages through the middle and latter parts of this piece awakens no sympathy. It has, nevertheless, a legitimate place in the Palace of Art, being nothing more than the logical development to the highest possible point of the *bravura* style that originated with Liszt. The latter of the two variations on "*Là ci darem*"—that section which precedes the entry of the champagne song—is the most bewildering and re-

pugnant part of the piece to the general public. For that reason, and also on account of its heart-breaking difficulties, the variation in question is often omitted. But Mr. Rosenthal omitted nothing yesterday. He hurled forth the Dionysiac declaration of war against all the chilly conventions and proprieties, the priggeries and pruderies of Mrs. Grundy, that forms the real content of the piece, with that technical power in which he is surpassed by no living performer. After many recalls he was constrained to play once more; and, by way of the sharpest possible contrast, he gave Chopin's Berceuse, bringing out all the delicate moonshine filigree of the right-hand part with infinite subtlety.

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**Paderewski**

*October 29,  
1902.*

The recital given yesterday evening at the Free Trade Hall seems to have been the last of Mr. Paderewski's art that we are likely to hear for some time. He is not expected to visit Manchester again during the next few years, and the occasion therefore seems fitting for a more general discussion of his playing than is usual in a simple notice of a recital. No doubt Mr. Paderewski is, on the whole, the most distinguished executive musician now before the public. The Paderewski "craze" in England and America is not a mere matter of fashion and folly, but is shared by experts and brethren of the craft, many of whom are irresistibly fascinated by Mr. Paderewski's playing, even while they disapprove of much that he does. Why will he insist on using a pianoforte with so hard a tone? Why is the

skelp of his hand on the keys so frequently audible from the most distant point of the hall, as a sound quite separate from the musical notes? Why does he never play Bach? Why does he always play Liszt's second Rhapsodie? Such are a few among the searchings of heart to which Mr. Paderewski's public performances give rise, and to none of them—probably—is there a complete and satisfactory answer. The shallow-toned instrument admits of greater clearness in the bass, and has a more scintillating kind of brilliancy in the upper octaves, and Mr. Paderewski, who likes all passage-work a little staccato, naturally favours it. The rage of his "con gran bravura" lends greater charm to his *grazioso* style, by the principle of contrast—a point on which he often lays emphasis by rapid alternations of the two styles. Iteration of show pieces, such as the second Rhapsodie, is excusable in a pianist who is incessantly touring the two worlds and playing to all sorts and conditions of men by land and by sea. As to the Bach question we know nothing. He may even have played Bach in other parts of the world. Mr. Paderewski's distinguishing quality is a certain extraordinary energy—not merely a one-sided physical, or even a two-sided physical and intellectual, energy; it is of the fingers and wrists, of the mind, the imagination, the heart, and the soul, and it makes Mr. Paderewski the most interesting of players, even though to the extreme kind of specialist, absorbed in problems of tone-production, he is not the most absolute master of his instrument at the present day. His art has a certain princely quality. It is indescribably *galant* and *chevaleresque*. He knows all the secrets of all

the most subtle dancing rhythms. He is a re-incarnation of Chopin, with almost the added virility of a Rubinstein. No wonder such a man fascinates, bewilders, and enchants the public! Greatly surpassed by Busoni in the interpretation of Beethoven, by Pachmann in the touch that persistently draws forth roundness, sweetness, and fulness of tone, and by Godowsky in the mastery of intricate line and the power of sucking out the very last drop of melody from every part of a composition, Paderewski still remains the most brilliant, fascinating, and successfully audacious of present-day musical performers, and in preferring him the general public is probably right, though the keen student of the pianoforte in particular may learn more from Godowsky, and the earnest lover of the musical classics in general, more from Busoni.

The programme of yesterday's recital was on the usual lines, except in regard to the Paganini Variations by Brahms, of which a selection from the two volumes were played with astounding dash and incisiveness. The unfamiliar Fantasia by Schumann was made perhaps a little more interesting than any other player could have made it. Beethoven's C sharp minor Sonata was given in a manner typical of Mr. Paderewski's Beethoven renderings, except that there happens to be nothing in the first and second movements that is alien to his Slavonic temperament. The finale, belonging to that element in Beethoven which appeals to a more broadly based human nature, sounded flimsy. The Chopin and Liszt pieces were all splendidly done. The long-continued demonstrations of enthusiasm in the latter part of the recital led

to three additional pieces, namely, a Nocturne of the performer's own composition, the inevitable Rhapsodie aforementioned, and Chopin's A flat Waltz, with a mixture of double and triple time.

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**Godowsky**

*March 17,  
1903.*

It is a little difficult to do justice to the qualities of Mr. Godowsky's pianoforte playing without at the same time saying too much and making claims that are not justified by the facts. It must

be remembered that there is no Liszt or Rubinstein at the present day. Those men were giants—mighty personalities who dominated the musical world, being essentially great as well as good players. The present generation has no such personality among solo performers. Talents that come to the top show a specialising tendency, and it is no longer possible to say that so-and-so is the greatest pianist of the age. One can only say that Mr. Busoni is the greatest musician who now plays pianoforte solos in public, and Mr. Paderewski is the most brilliant performer on the pianoforte, and Mr. Godowsky the most absolute expert in tone production on the same instrument. It is not to be denied that, taking Mr. Godowsky's art as a whole, and thus including musical conception, one finds it imposing. He never comes within a measurable distance of bad style: he always gives an essentially good rendering of anything that he undertakes to perform. But what one principally admires is not his mind, imagination, or temperament, but simply his hands—his warm, subtle, and preternaturally deft



wrists and fingers. Having apparently been warned that the peculiar acoustic of the hall has a tendency to make any pianoforte sound as if the pedal were down nearly all the time, he yesterday avoided the bewilderingly elaborate style of which he has made a speciality. But, in addition to the flawless perfection of all the passage work, there was abundant opportunity in the series of pieces by Beethoven, Chopin, and Liszt to admire that marvellous control of tone which often enables him to reveal fresh melody in quite familiar compositions. The pieces that were least affected by the cross reverberations of the hall were the Etude in extended chords and the C sharp minor Scherzo by Chopin. On the other hand, no one who has not heard Mr. Godowsky under more favourable circumstances can imagine, from the experience of yesterday evening, the magical effect of his performance in the G sharp minor Etude in thirds for the right hand. In playing the exquisite F minor Concert Etude by Liszt he deliberately kept the tone down to a minimum, to avoid the buzz and confusion as far as possible. Liszt's transcription of the "Tannhäuser" Overture was used for the display piece that audiences expect at the end of a recital. It is characteristic of Mr. Godowsky that his favourite amusement is making rearrangements of Chopin's Etudes—the "Godowsky Bedevilments," Mr. Huneker calls them. These include the celebrated combination of the two G flat Etudes, where the left hand has to play the one in the first book while the right plays the legato and staccato improvisation from the second volume, and another in which three Etudes in A minor are brought together contra-

puntally. Though they are all of course anathema to the purist, the ingenuity displayed in some of these things is so prodigious that no one interested in pianoforte playing can well be indifferent to them.

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**Lamond**

*December 15,*  
*1903.*

Mr. Frederic Lamond's strongest points as a pianist are not those which the wider public most readily appreciates. He is not one of the pianistic experts in the narrower sense, like Messrs. Pachmann and Godowsky, for whom neat fingering and smooth tone-production are much more important than musical interpretation. Mr. Lamond is before all things a virile player. His style is broad and a little severe. He lacks the peculiar grace and charm of Mr. Paderewski in the treatment of dancing rhythm no less obviously than that faculty, akin to a Japanese juggler's, which enables Mr. Pachmann to bring from the pianoforte a tone more smooth and sweet than was ever before imagined possible. Mr. Lamond's qualities are entirely different. Plastic force, technical and imaginative grasp of the greater composers' greater ideas, a deep and powerful but rather rough tone—these are the characteristics of his playing, and they are characteristics better appreciated in Germany than in this country, where music-lovers think too much of the merely smooth and the merely deft and the “sweetly pretty.” It is rather surprising that neither of his recent performances in Manchester should have included any example of Beethoven, of whose

greater Sonatas Mr. Lamond is now probably the best living interpreter, with the possible exception of Mr. Busoni. He was of course quite right to play plenty of Liszt, but it may be regretted that he gave so much of the later Liszt—who, conscious of himself as the world-famous magician of the piano, often improvised on rather poor themes, as if to show that any theme, however weak, could be made interesting by his transcendental style of ornamentation—rather than the earlier Liszt who wrote things of such power and eloquence as the “Mazeppa” Etude. Mr. Lamond’s mind seems recently to have been running on Liszt’s Tarantelle Fantasias. He played the “Venezia e Napoli” Tarantelle at the Hallé Concert and the “Muette de Portici” Tarantelle yesterday—both pieces which are chiefly of interest as proving that Liszt could improvise effectively upon any conceivable sort of thematic material. It would have been much more interesting to hear the “Mazeppa,” which Mr. Lamond played in the composer’s presence and to his evident satisfaction when last he was in London, a few months before his death in 1886, or some piece in that pregnant early manner. His best performance yesterday was in Chopin’s A flat Polonaise—a composition of such excellence that, hackneyed as it is, it cannot in a good rendering fail to give pleasure. Mr. Lamond did full justice to the majestic beauty of the themes, which are all absolutely good, and brought out the famous *basso ostinato* section in some respects better than we have heard it done since Rubinstein’s death. He did not adopt any of the revised versions of the left-hand octave passages favoured by certain distinguished modern

performers. On the other hand, he did adopt Rubinstein's version of the ending, with the unexpected and telling chord of C major just before the final phrase. In Rubinstein's F minor Barcarolle—so interesting in rhythm, so original in colouring—Mr. Lamond was not entirely successful, his temperament apparently not furnishing a key to the vein of lyrism in which the piece is conceived. Yet in Liszt's "Liebestraum" he was perfect, though one might have expected that his Beethovenish tastes would have rebelled against the hothouse atmosphere of the composition. The opening performance of Schumann's "Carnaval" was powerful and distinguished, but too broad in style to be in keeping with the sub-title "Scènes mignonnes." On neither of these recent occasions has Mr. Lamond played anything of his own, though he has composed plenty of effective stuff for his instrument. He is beyond all question by far the most distinguished pianist of British extraction that has yet arisen.

## CHAPTER XI.

## VIOLIN-PLAYING.

**Ysaye** Two complete Concerti, each in the orthodox three movements, exhibited the distinguished Belgian master's style, first in strictly classical then in more florid and more highly coloured modern music. Of concerti by the great Bach for a single solo violin only two are extant. One, in A minor, has been frequently played here in recent years by Dr. Joachim and Mr. Brodsky. The other, in E major, is comparatively unfamiliar. Perhaps the accompaniment, which in the original score is for strings alone, has been considered rather meagre, and the extremely simple form of the concluding Rondo may also have been regarded as unsatisfactory. For Mr. Ysaye's performance of the E major Concerto the accompaniment has been strengthened with an organ part written by Mr. Gevaert, Principal of the Conservatoire de Musique in Brussels, and it can scarcely be questioned that the work as he presents it is beautiful, interesting, and highly satisfactory as a concert piece. The most characteristic part is



the middle movement, which, as in Bach's Sonata for the same instrument and in the same key, is in Chaconne form, with a bass theme that wanders freely through different keys, while the upper strings play a descent and the solo instrument embroiders. A most powerful and telling performance was given of this noble Adagio, the accompaniment being assigned to a small group of orchestral players together with the organ, and the soloist devoting all the resources of his art to bringing out the delicate figuration of the upper voice with ineffably sweet tone and subtle phrasing. The first movement is remarkable for such wealth of thematic development as one scarcely expects to find in a work composed so long before Beethoven's time, and the finale brings the work to a close upon a note of simple and hearty feeling. If strong contrast with the style of Bach was desired, the Saint-Saëns concerto was well chosen for the second example of violin music. Rich in colouring and surcharged with sensuous delights, the modern Frenchman's composition passes along on its triumphant career, like some fine lady, radiant in natural beauty and superbly attired, witty, graceful, charming, and in every way effective—perhaps all the more effective for being a little heartless. In the performance of this music Mr. Ysaye was altogether in his glory. His astonishing warmth and depth of tone lent fresh eloquence to such new phase of the solo part. He made his instrument sing his Andantino theme with ravishing sweetness, and his overwhelming technical power enabled him to revel in the rushing and flying passages of the Mephistophelean finale. Everything was magnificent,

including even the harmonies in the Coda of the slow movement, and the Concerto ended in a blaze of triumph. There is only one fault to be found with Mr. Ysaye, namely, that he makes everything sound modern.

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**Ysaye and  
Busoni**

*February 6.  
1902.*

If another and older master of the violin is commonly described—as it were, *emeritus*—as greatest living violinist, it is unquestionably to Mr. Ysaye that the title belongs in its full sense. Unparalleled warmth, richness, and bouquet of tone, added to sovereign mastery of technique and a marvellous temperament, full of fiery energy and yet apparently incapable of exaggeration—such are the most obvious qualities of Mr. Ysaye's art. He is not a genuine classic, like Joachim. Bach and Beethoven he plays in virtue of infallible artistic *savoir vivre*; but he is obviously in fuller sympathy with a Sonata or Concerto by Saint-Saëns, a Suite by Vieuxtemps, or a Fantasia by Wieniawski. Yet that artistic *savoir vivre* is so complete that it is nearly always impossible to find specific fault with his renderings of the classics. This was the case yesterday in the Bach Sonata, which headed the programme. Each of the four movements declared the mastery of the string player, no less than of the pianist, Mr. Busoni—real kindred spirits of Bach and Beethoven. The Vieuxtemps Suite, too, was given with such beauty of tone that the superficiality of the composition was entirely disguised, the slow movement sounding almost as though Bach had written it. In the

concluding sonata—a late work by Saint-Saëns—it is scarcely necessary to say that the violin-playing was perfect. Perhaps some of the listeners remembered a performance by the same violinist of Saint-Saëns's Third Concerto at a Hallé Concert not long ago. Again yesterday we were treated to such playing as bewilders the senses and seemed to place the transcendental cleverness of the French composer on a level with the real imaginative power of greater men. Mr. Ysaye was extremely well disposed—in fact, quite at his best—and was rapturously applauded. As an extra piece he gave Beethoven's Romance in G, the rendering being above criticism.

Utterly dissimilar as Messrs. Ysaye and Busoni are in temperament and artistic character, they meet as master musicians, and the association is in the highest degree interesting. The one is all sense and the other all spirit, and one feels that only the immensely high accomplishment of both makes the association possible. Mr. Busoni's solo was that most capricious and austere Sonata, Beethoven's 109th work. It was all incomparably well rendered, and the Variations in the last movement, which ultimately spin themselves into a kind of Fantasia, were a prodigious revelation of technical power. It is long since such a pianoforte performance has been heard in this city—a performance stamped by austere beauty and lofty ideality, and free from all earthly elements. What other pianist at the present day, we venture to ask, could give us such a thing?

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**Kubelik***November 5,  
1902.*

Popularity such as Mr. Jan Kubelik, the young Bohemian violinist, at present enjoys makes it very difficult to criticise his performance. He has not to meet the same conditions as other violinists. Thousands of persons who care little or nothing for music attend his recitals merely because he is a recognised society pet, and he commands a fee that makes it impossible for orchestral societies to engage him. The restrictions imposed by this state of things are obvious. He can only play with pianoforte accompaniment, or with none at all; he is obliged to adhere almost entirely to music that is light in style and of only secondary artistic worth, and during a certain proportion of each recital he has to give himself up entirely to sensationalism. Thus, after hearing him play through three complete recital programmes, we do not feel qualified to express more than a very fragmentary opinion upon his art. That he has all the ordinary technique of the instrument at his fingers' ends is a notorious fact. His tone is never remarkable for volume, but often for sweetness. His truth of intonation in the midst of intricate passage-work is remarkable, and gives the sense of hearing a rare kind of satisfaction. His memory seems to be entirely trustworthy, and his manner is free from affectation; but as to his musical conception, we can only say that it is quite adequate to the interpretation of such a charming piece of light, racy, and popular music as Grieg's third Sonata. The one scrap of Bach that he played yesterday—the unaccompanied Prelude in E major—was not

specially well done, and how he plays Beethoven, Mozart, or any of the great masters we do not know at all. His most *recherchés* effects of tone Mr. Kubelik seems to hold in reserve for the encore pieces. In the allegretto movement of the Grieg Sonata—a most tenderly homesick and lovesick little northern Romance—he did not let his violin sing with all the sweetness of which it is capable, as was afterwards shown in the arrangement of Schubert's "Ave Maria" and in an unpublished Serenade by the performer's friend and compatriot Drdla—both played as extra pieces at the end of the recital. Virtuoso music, in the rendering of which Mr. Kubelik is well known to be a great expert, was represented in yesterday's recital by the following pieces:—Wienaiwski's Fantasia on Themes from Gounod's "Faust," Paganini's caprice "I Palpiti," Bazzini's "Ronde des Lutins," the last-named played among the encore pieces. We do not, as a rule, care for the Fantasia on operatic airs, but Wieniawski's "Faust" Fantasia is written with such wonderful ingenuity and musical skill that it cannot be placed in the same category with the mere strings of tunes with perfunctory accompaniments and connecting sections that such pieces usually are. The Variation on the waltz theme, with the melody in harmonics and the rushing accompaniment figure in the ordinary tone of the instrument, is a marvel of successful audacity. It so happens, too, that the rendering of this almost impossible Variation was the most brilliant thing in yesterday's recital.

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**Kreisler**

*November 6,  
1902.*

We live in an age that seems likely to be known in the future as the period of star violinists. It is curious to note how the musical world illustrates the saying "It never rains but it pours." At one period we have a long string of pianistic infant prodigies. Hoffmann, Hegner, Hambourg—they come rapidly to the front, one after another, growing ever younger and younger, and nearly always beginning with "h." Next we break into the period of youthful violinists, beginning with "k." Kubelik, Kocian, Kreisler come tumbling over each other's heel, each one causing embarrassment to the critics for lack of any stronger terms of commendation than were bestowed upon the last. It is true the string players are not of such tender years as were the pianists on their first appearance. The youngest of the violin prodigies was Bronislav Hubermann, who not many years ago shook his elf-locks at the Philharmonic Society of Vienna and more nearly succeeded in turning the heads of that august, formidable, and severely critical body than might have been thought possible. For the present we are mainly concerned with Mr. Kreisler, who is not so desperately youthful, but is a mature and and military-looking man, though he is commonly reckoned among the players of the new school, or the rising generation. His programme yesterday was open to some of the same objections as Mr. Kubelik's on Tuesday evening. It included nothing from the major prophets of music, the most important piece being Tartini's "Trillo del Diavolo" Sonata—no doubt one of the best

examples of that school which grew up in Italy soon after the perfecting of the violin at the end of the seventeenth century. In a well-contrasted style was the only other piece in more than one movement that he played, namely, Vieuxtemps' second Concerto. In the rendering of these pieces one noted a peculiarly incisive manner of giving full value to all the detail of the figuration, and also a singing tone of rich and strangely penetrating quality. Mr. Kreisler's style is in sharp contrast with Mr. Kubelik's. Instead of caressing the instrument and coaxing the tone out of it, he wrestles with it and plucks out the heart of its mystery. Nor does he seem to care for the sputtering Paganinities so dear to the heart of Mr. Kubelik. His pieces in the second part of the programme were a rather Mozartian Larghetto from a Sonata by Nardini (an eighteenth-century Italian); a "Tambourin" by Leclair (an eighteenth-century Frenchman), much modernised in the arrangement; a bagatelle called "L'Abeille," by Franz Schubert of Dresden—not, of course, the famous Schubert, but a violinist who died some twenty-five years ago; an arrangement by Marcello Rossi of the "Song without Words" in F, by Tchaïkovsky; and, finally, the Allegretto grazioso from the same Nardini Sonata, played as an encore piece. "L'Abeille"—a clever show-piece in perpetual motion triplets, played with a mute on the bridge—was encored and repeated.

## CHAPTER XII.

## MUSIC IN THE 19th CENTURY.

Mr. J. A. Fuller  
Maitland's En-  
glish Music in  
the 19th century

*May 20. 1902.*

As applied to Parry, Stanford, or Mackenzie, we are instructed, the reproach of being "academic" has absolutely no aptness whatever. These worthy dons are creative artists of the highest possible order, to be classed with Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner, and it thus appears that about the middle of the century British music arose like the lark, soaring at once to the topmost airs of the welkin; that to find a parallel for the revelation of genius during the fifty ensuing British years one has to range over two German centuries! Not even Beethoven is to be excepted from the list of things that were matched by our professorial larks, swans, giants, heroes, angels, and demigods! Now all this represents a rather deplorable state of things. Why is it—I cannot help asking once more—that at the present time in this country so much worse nonsense is written about music than about drama, literature, or any other kindred subject? A great stir was recently made by the production of "Paolo and Francesca," yet no admirer of Mr. Stephen Phillips has thought it

necessary to call him the equal of Shakespeare. There is certainly this excuse for Mr. Fuller Maitland, that in the London press of recent years much extravagance of the opposite kind has appeared—excessive and, in a few cases, positively brutal detraction of Parry and Stanford and their school—and perhaps the chief blame for the hysterical nonsense of supporters lies within certain opponents who have attacked without regard either for the facts of the case or even for common decency. In any case a state of things has been brought about in which one party howls “Incompetent humbug!” while the other shrieks “Genius of the highest order!”

In the meantime what about the truth and the critical currency? And is it not a pity that Mr. Fuller Maitland should have missed the opportunity afforded to him by the writing of this history to put off controversial frenzy and return to a more judicial spirit? We that have to do with the musical world are all perfectly well aware—whether we describe Parry and Stanford as “academic” or protest against that epithet—that they are men of high distinction who have played a leading and brilliant part in the English musical revival and generally have deserved well of the musical republic. For my part, while fully recognising their eminence both in talent and character, I am of opinion that their claims to regard as absolute creative artists are habitually overstated by their supporters in the press. The appearance of Parry created a considerable stir. His imposing grasp of choral polyphony was something new in English music. His great intelligence, his wide sympathy and geniality, his

virility and industry—all these qualities united to arouse enthusiastic hopes. But, as Mr. Fuller Maitland writes on page 185, “with the passage of years the group of composers will fall into truer and truer perspective.” There has already been a considerable passage of years since those first compositions, but the early enthusiastic estimate has not been justified. Outside the circle of his pupils and personal friends no one now seems to care very much for his music. Here in the North of England concert societies find that the public admiration of it is a rapidly vanishing quantity. Three years ago his “Job” and “Blest Pair of Sirens” were given here, but ever since that occasion his name has been something of a terror to our concert societies. A frequent experience in regard to Parry’s music is that, whereas a first hearing impresses in virtue of massiveness and energy or of striking and unconventional dramatic touches, second and subsequent hearings are discouraging. “Job” is the most favourable case among the choral and orchestral works that I have heard. It is thoroughly artistic in conception and unconventional in treatment. Moreover, the lyrical interlude of the shepherd-boy’s song helps along the early part very happily, and Mr. Plunket Greene is always eloquent in the “Lamentations.” Nevertheless, I found the second hearing a sad experience. Now the impression that there is something wrong with Parry’s music—notwithstanding all the learning, resource, wide sympathies, intelligence, and so forth that it shows—is undoubtedly a very general one. To find any person not personally attached to the composer taking up one of his works, great or



small, is exceedingly rare. The composer's personal popularity is great, but outside the charmed circle no one seems ready to spend a shilling in hearing his stuff or to risk a shilling in giving it. Mr. Fuller Maitland says that the provincial choral societies are faithful to Parry, and this may be true in some cases. To a society in the habit of occupying themselves with the cantatas of Dr. Gaul I could imagine Parry would seem the seventh heaven of art. But in the great centres or in any place where there are ardent souls not to be deceived as to what is genuine in music a revival of interest in Parry seems to me very improbable.

At his worst, *e.g.*, in "King Saul," he appeals; at his best, *e.g.*, in the "Soldier's Tent" (song with orchestral accompaniment), he almost persuades. But the horrors of the empty tone masses hurled at one's head in the "Saul" choruses, or of the purple patches of Wagnerian orchestration associated with inept vocal phrases in the principal monologue of the same oratorio—those horrors are so very genuine, whereas the charm of such a song as the "Soldier's Tent," where the composer keeps comparatively well to the point and scores with comparative aptness, is still somewhat doubtful. A remark of Mr. Fuller Maitland's helps me to a possible explanation of the something wrong. He commends the "delicate humour" of "When icicles hang by the wall" in Parry's English Lyrics. Now I have certainly never heard that song, but I must have read it somewhere, for I distinctly remember the humorous and expressive accompaniment at the words "coughing drowns the parson's saw." It

also comes back to me that other passages, such as all that eight-part counterpoint at the end of "Blest Pair of Sirens," look exceedingly well on paper. Possibly, then, the key to the mystery is that Parry's music is analogous to those plays which read well but act badly. Perhaps the way to enjoy it is to read it and admire the fertility of device while taking great care never to hear it, and so escape the consciousness of the fact that the actual wine of that music as it flows forth is not quite the genuine thing; that, notwithstanding notable fulness of body, the quality is gritty, the flavour somewhat acrid and inky, the bouquet artificial and multifariously compounded.

The root of the mischief I take to be that the composer—for all his great and imposing powers, his fine taste, his profound and varied learning—is wanting in sureness of touch and consequently in the ability to establish that correspondence between form and idea without which a work of art cannot properly be said to exist. Mr. Fuller Maitland claims for Parry and his group that they "have far more extensive resources in the different styles of music" than, for example, the modern Russians, and this brings us back to the point of the reproach conveyed in the epithet "academic." To musicians bent on the holding of official posts and on success in a worldly career it is of the first importance to "show extensive resources in the different styles of music," and in the large body of Parry's compositions I find far more evidence of desire to show such extensive resources than of the artistic impulse to make music that is absolutely genuine. Sullivan, with his much lower aims and ideals, is for me a

better balanced personality and a truer artist. Much of his music in the comic operas is quite to the point. The outward form corresponds to the inward idea in a certain absolute and final manner which there is no mistaking. Hence the clearness of Sullivan's musical individuality or physiognomy. He was not intent on showing resources, but on modelling his material into conformity with his idea, and, because at his best he had the power of doing that, his physiognomy is clear to us and his art vital. It thus appears that such commercialism as Sullivan's does less mischief than such academic tendencies as Parry's.

In Stanford's case I have often protested against the indiscriminate use of the epithet "academic." It seems to me that his compositions on Irish subjects require to be considered quite apart from all the rest. However deplorable may be that Brahmsian vein running through a great mass of his non-Irish music, he really does in his "Phaudrig," "Shamus," and Irish Symphony and in many of his Irish songs entirely escape from his common-room and give us open-air music. No doubt, as Mr. Fuller Maitland very justly points out, the humour of the Dogberry scenes in Stanford's latest opera is admirable. Those are the scenes in which the composer has followed the model of Verdi's "Falstaff" most closely. Elsewhere he has undertaken to be more original and has not prospered so well. The music of the love scenes is terrible. All that twisted, clever stuff can never have any but a chilling, afflicting, alienating effect on a soul in which any spark is left either of youthfulness or of sympathy with youth. Stanford's musical

cleverness, exceeding that of any other mortal except Camille Saint-Saëns, has been his bane. His sense of humour, too, is perversely adjusted. In connection with any but an Irish subject it is always liable to mislead him, and I have little doubt that it is the humourist quite as much as the don in him which nowadays makes it impossible for him to treat a love-passage in any but a chilly, clever, allusive, intelligible-only-to-the-initiated style. He was a very different man in 1881 when his "Bower of Roses by Bendeemer's Stream" was first heard. Not that he has even now lost his faculty of lyrical tenderness altogether. If the sentiment be associated with an infant, or penetrated with a sense of the weird and uncanny, or intermingled with (Irish) patriotic feeling, he can still find the symbol, as his quite recent music to Moira O'Neill's "Songs from the Glens of Antrim" abundantly proves. But the note of warmth and simplicity proper to youthful romance he seems to have lost. A peculiar case among Stanford's compositions is represented by the Irish Symphony, concerning which Mr. Fuller Maitland has nothing to say. Here, notwithstanding the Irish subject, the gown shows through to some slight extent in one place, namely, the development section of the first movement. The conventional critic finds fault with the scherzo in the form of an Irish jig as unsymphonic, as it undoubtedly is. But there would be more sense in suggesting that the composer should have made up his mind to be thoroughly unsymphonic throughout the work, bringing his first movement into harmony with the fine sennachee's improvisation that stands

second, the magnificent racy jig, and the buoyant finale. We should thus have had an Irish Rhapsody in four movements without any defect. Even now the one touch of the composer's evil genius that comes out in the first movement is too slight to spoil the work, which has been a joy for a long time, and does not seem to lose its charm. It thus seems to me that Stanford is far too good a man for an "academic," though I cannot deny that the epithet is actually justified by more than half the entire body of his published works.

After all it was scarcely likely that the sudden efflorescence of English music, ensuing upon a long period of sterility, would lead at once to fruit of complete maturity. We have now reached the second generation since the revival, and it would be a pity if our best men at the present day were nowise in advance of the leaders who came forward thirty years ago.

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**Centenary  
Article**

*January 1,  
1901.*

At the dawn of the nineteenth century music was at a low ebb in this country. Purcell had been dead more than a hundred years, and Handel about forty years. The spirit of Puritanism had killed the madrigal-singing of Shakespearean England and suppressed every other manifestation of the popular musical genius. Charles II. had come back from his long residence abroad with a contempt for English music, both sacred and secular, which, as Pepys's Diary shows, he did not hesitate to express in public, and thus the merry-makings of the Restoration brought no revival of



the national art. Nor was it likely that the situation, as regards Court influence, should be improved by the House of Hanover—at the time of their accession a race of aliens having no sympathy with the national development of the art. Characteristic of the view that cultivated Englishmen took of music about the middle of the eighteenth century is a letter of Lord Chesterfield's,\* written when his son was staying at Venice, to warn him against all the “singing, piping, and fiddling” of Italy. He gives the young man to understand that it is unbecoming in a gentleman to take part in such things, though he may pay a fiddler to play to him. Elsewhere, too, Lord Chesterfield is even more crushing. He lays stress on the inevitable connection between music and low company. The Venice letter was written in 1749—six years after the first performance of the “Messiah” in London and ten years before Handel's death. Perhaps, therefore, the Chesterfield view of music was at that time exceptional. But it must have become more prevalent in the ensuing half-century, and the view of music as an inferior art, represented in its extreme form by Lord Chesterfield, is far from being extinct at the present day. At the same time, fully to account for the low level of musical taste in the England of 1801, due allowance must be made for the comparative neglect of all but political and military affairs caused by the tremendous agitations of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars.

In the first year of the nineteenth century began

\* “A taste of sculpture and painting is in my mind as becoming, as a taste of fiddling and piping is unbecoming, a man of fashion.”

the triumphant career of John Braham, the first of the three great English tenor singers who successively adorned the ensuing hundred years. Braham was a good singer, but perhaps the most deplorable composer that ever successfully foisted his rubbish on a tasteless public. His "Death of Nelson" persists to the present day, for the justification of those who share Lord Chesterfield's musical opinions, and even that unpardonable mixture of sentimental slip-slop and half-hearted cock-a-doodle-doo seems to have been a comparatively favourable example of the compositions with which Braham regaled the London public during the early years of the century. The scene of his first triumphs was Covent Garden Theatre, where he was accustomed to appear in composite operatic entertainments, his own part being almost invariably written by himself. A few years after the London *début* of Braham the penny-whistle melodies of Sir Henry Bishop sufficed to make him the most popular composer of the day. In 1810, when Bishop became director at Covent Garden, none of the institutions that have played an important part in the musical progress of the century as yet existed in this country. It is true the Festival of the Three Choirs had been held regularly for a very long time already. But there was no Philharmonic Society, no genuine opera, no Saturday and Monday popular concerts of chamber-music, no Academy or College of Music, no Crystal Palace or Hallé orchestra. The great choral associations, independent of Cathedral authorities, had not yet been formed, and England was far too much isolated from the rest of the world in regard to musical affairs.

It is curious to note how precisely the downfall of Napoleon corresponds with the beginning of better things in the English musical world. Leipsic was fought in 1813, and earlier in that year—as though with a premonition that an era was at hand in which it would be possible to cultivate the arts of peace—a group of musicians assembled in London to discuss the formation of a Philharmonic Society. The event is of striking significance. Hitherto music had flourished only under the patronage of Lords Temporal and Spiritual; but the *souffle* of the French Revolution had passed over the world, and it was time for music—which had put off the courtly periwig and the courtly graces, and had attained in Beethoven to the purely human standpoint—to be established on a broader basis. Let us give the worthy Bishop his due. A well-meaning person, if a trivial composer, he helped to found the London Philharmonic Society, which was the first society in Europe, and in the world, consciously formed for the furtherance of musical art and for no other purpose.

Glancing now at musical activity in other countries, we find attention necessarily concentrated in the first instance upon the heroic figure of Beethoven, who in this year (1813) had already given to the world his *Eroica*, C minor, Pastoral, and Seventh Symphonies, besides his Violin Concerto, Razoumoffsky Quartets, Waldstein and Appassionata Sonatas, his one opera “Fidelio,” together with the third “Leonara” overture, and many other works of towering genius. As yet, however, the real significance of Beethoven was undreamed-of in the philosophy of mankind in general, if dimly suspected by a few enlightened

persons, mostly resident in Vienna. Mozart had died before the dawn of the century, and Haydn soon after it, having demonstrated the incomparable excellence of that Viennese school (founded on the teachings of Fux's "Gradus ad Parnassum"), which had early attracted Beethoven—a Rhinelanders by birth—within its charmed circle, and held him there for life. In the first year of the London Philharmonic Society's activity the music of those three—Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven—formed the staple of the concert programmes. In the second year the first performance in England of the *Eroica* was given. Other works of the highest importance by the same master soon followed, and in 1817 an unsuccessful attempt was made to induce Beethoven to come to England himself and conduct compositions of his own for the Society. In this manner connection was established between this country and the great central stream of musical life and energy at that time.

Beethoven was the colossus who bridged over the gulf between the two great countries of Classicism and Romance. Of the Romantic composers, Weber—the founder of German National Opera—was the earliest born. His music was first heard in England during the twenties, the opera "*Oberon*" being brought out at Covent Garden under his own direction. Another great Romantic composer born before the close of the eighteenth century was Schubert—a wonderful but most unfortunate man of genius, destined to meet with scarcely any recognition during his lifetime. At a much later period he was discovered and introduced to this country by Sir George Grove. The

real seed-time of the Romantic School, however, was the period from 1803 to 1813, which saw the birth of Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Verdi, and Wagner (of all except Berlioz between 1809 and 1813). It is curious that all the stars destined to dominate the musical firmament of the period following Beethoven's death should thus have risen above the horizon within the short period of ten years, and all but one within a period of five years. Every one of them, except Schumann, came sooner or later to our hospitable shores and played a more or less important part in that process by which we have gradually learned to discard Lord Chesterfield's maxim about having nothing to do with fiddling ourselves, while laying more and more to heart his other maxim about paying fiddlers to play to us.

Even more important than these flying visits of master composers from abroad, for their influence on the formation of taste, were the more regular visits of distinguished Continental performers, some of whom, indeed, not only came regularly but came to stay. Of these the most important were Mr. (afterwards Sir Charles) Hallé, who in 1857 founded the Manchester concerts that still bear his name; Mr. August Manns, who became conductor at the Crystal Palace in 1855; and Dr. Richter, who has been our regular visitor since 1877 and is now, to the great credit of the Hallé Committee and their supporters, living in our midst. Scarcely less important among such foreign influences making for the welfare of musical art in this country is the violin-playing of Dr. Joachim, who has been our constant visitor ever since 1844.

Pursuing the signs of awakening musical life in



the second and ensuing decades of the century, we note the foundation of the Royal Academy of Music in 1823, and of the Sacred Harmonic Society in 1832. That Society, now defunct, was originally founded with the idea of replacing an older institution called the "Antient Concerts," which had come to grief through depending too much on aristocratic patronage. The Sacred Harmonic Society did good work by performing Handel's "Israel in Egypt," "Dettingen Te Deum," and other works, besides the "Messiah." They also did something to make Mozart's church music known in London, though with little encouragement from the public, and they rendered a service to art by insisting on complete performances instead of the scraps and tit-bits from oratorios that were popular at that day. Soon after the founding of the Sacred Harmonic Society, that is about the beginning of the Victorian era, came the palmy days of Italian opera in London. But though the expensive warblings of Grisi, Lablache, and Rubini were no doubt found highly exhilarating by the privileged few who could afford to hear them, it is doubtful whether they did anything for the development of the national taste, except, perhaps, by firing the ambition of Sims Reeves.

Great as is the value of such fine stimulating influences—the visits of distinguished players, singers, composers, and conductors, and performances of master works by musical societies,—they are not enough to leaven the mass of the people without systematic educational endeavour. Reference has been made to the founding of the Royal Academy of Music. Sixty years later the Royal College was instituted, with a view to bringing

educational opportunities more into conformity with the wants of the time. Among the work done for the improvement of musical education during the intervening period Mr. John Hullah's is worthy of specially honourable mention. After studying popular musical education in France, and especially the Orphéon movement, Mr. Hullah began classes at Exeter Hall for the musical instruction of schoolmasters, and thus originated the vast development of musical training in English elementary schools. In opposition to Mr. Hullah's principles, Mr. John Curwen in 1853 founded the Tonic Sol-fa Association, which has since spread its branches all over England. There is supposed to be some sort of connection between staff notation and Church principles, tonic sol-fa and Dissent. Some day, it may be hoped, the history of choral singing in England will be written with the care that the subject deserves. It remains to this day the principal contribution of this country to musical art in modern times. Theoretical master-ship originated with the Germans, refined and exact orchestral playing with the French, and brilliant solo singing with the Italians, but it has been reserved for this country to perfect the art of choral singing. Certain persons, more patriotic than truthful, try to make out that the English are best in everything, but this claim in regard to choral singing bears investigation.

Next to the absolute contempt and neglect of music from which we began to emerge early in the century, our greatest misfortune has been a tendency to prefer composers representing the end of some artistic development while rejecting the turbid and formally imperfect but inspiring initia-

tors. Thus, in one age we worship Handel—a mighty musical architect, but one who never did and never could inspire anyone—while we detest Bach, the most powerful of all inspiring, stimulating, school-forming influences. In another age we make a somewhat similar mistake in regard to Mendelssohn and Schumann, and it is even possible to recognise the same unfortunate tendency at the present day in the public attitude towards Richard Strauss and Tchaikovsky respectively, the former a rugged composer teeming with ideas and varied suggestions, the other a remarkable painter in tones but peculiarly restricted in the range of his ideas and emotions, taking care never to suggest anything, but only to attempt what he can render with symmetrical completeness. It is impossible not to regret that we should thus continually prefer composers who lead to nothing, though that is just what might be expected as a result of Lord Chesterfield's principles.

With regard to the extraordinary Mendelssohnian taste of the British public which placed the accomplished fair-weather composer on a much higher pinnacle here than he ever occupied in his own country, there is even now one important question that has not yet been, and probably never will be, settled. That Mendelssohn was long absurdly overrated is certain; but the question is—Had there been no Mendelssohn, would our choirs and public taken to better stuff, or would they simply have concerned themselves so much the less with any sort of music? Possibly the Mendelssohn craze was a necessary evil, supplying the requisite spoon-meat for a period of musical infancy. It is, however, associated with much humiliation. The

main current of musical life and energy since Beethoven's time has lain in the field of dramatic composition, and from that main current we remained excluded for a most unconscionable time. The case became a painful one, only to be met by such sapient observations as that of the late Mr. Hueffer that "the British public likes the dramatic stage and likes serious music, but does not like the two things in combination." The real champion of the Wagnerian art in this country was Dr. Richter, who, by the performance of extracts at his orchestral concerts, gradually opened the ears of the public and brought home the music to their hearts. In that task he was well supported by Mr. Manns at the Crystal Palace and by Sir Charles Hallé in the Manchester neighbourhood. Hence the fact that though the two impresarios who gave performances of the great "Ring" drama in London in the eighties incurred grievous loss, Mr. Schultz Curtius gave it in the nineties and prospered, and that the voice of senseless detraction is mute, except in the case of one or two incorrigible old mandarins who cannot escape from the fixed idea that life consists in the correspondence of an organism with the environment of its great-grandfather.

The best of the English Cathedral composers was Samuel Sebastian Wesley, whose enthusiasm for Bach, antedating the movement initiated by Mendelssohn, has scarcely met with sufficient acknowledgement. Soon after the middle of the century a group of British composers with a wider than the purely ecclesiastical scope began to appear. Sullivan, Mackenzie, Parry, Cowen, and Stanford all learned their art in Germany, and

came back to their native country to practise it. All of them have written oratorios, but without lasting success except in the case of Sullivan's "Golden Legend." Dr. Cowen's Scandinavian and Professor Stanford's Irish Symphonies have done something to win esteem for English music in other countries. But the great achievement of British music during the past fifty years has been the Gilbertian operas, in which Sir Arthur Sullivan matched with a perfect musical counterpart the kind of libretto furnished by W. S. Gilbert, an original type of comic opera being thus created. Among younger composers, Mr. Hamish M'Cunn made a reputation with his "Land of the Mountain and the Flood" overture that he failed to confirm. Mr. Coleridge-Taylor has had a very rapid success with his "Hiawatha" music, whether of a more lasting kind remains to be proved. By far the most remarkable British composer of recently made reputation is Dr. Edward Elgar. Mr. Otto Lessmann, editor of the "Allgemeine Musikzeitung" and the most distinguished musical critic of Germany at the present day, wrote thus (after hearing "The Dream of Gerontius" at Birmingham last October): "If I am not mistaken, the coming man of the English musical world has already appeared, an artist who has shaken off the bonds of conventional form and opened his mind and heart to those great gifts which the masters of the expiring century have left as an inheritance to the future—Edward Elgar, composer of the one great religious choral work brought to a first hearing at the Birmingham Festival, namely 'The Dream of Gerontius.'"

Progress has been very much more rapid during



the last twenty-five years than in any other period of the century. Indeed, so wonderfully has been the revolution in public taste effected by improved educational opportunities and the more artistic and expressive style of singing and playing introduced by the Wagnerian school, that musical art now finds itself in a completely new atmosphere, and hope leaps out, probably asking too much of the immediate future. The great lesson that requires to be brought home at the present time to all concerned, directly or indirectly, with musical affairs is that music is one of the fine arts, that it is subject to the laws of art and no others. This seems a painfully obvious principle when stated, but how rarely does anyone act on it! We find any number of persons pursuing music as a sport, others as a business, others as a mild discipline for children—a kind of drill,—others again as a learned subject, but very few as an art. The first result of mastering this lesson would be the shaking off of fixed ideas, such as that every composer must play the organ and write church music. Chopin wrote nothing but pianoforte pieces, yet his fame is undying, and much more is heard of his music now—fifty years after his death—than ever before, while plenty of composers whose works include voluminous compositions for choir and orchestra are absolutely forgotten in their own lifetime. The real artist is distinguished from other men above all by being enamoured of perfection. He finds what he can do and rests satisfied with doing that, whether it be a great thing or a small, whether it be one thing or many.

## CHAPTER XIII.

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DR. HANS RICHTER.

*(October 20, 1897.)*

The genius of musical interpretation is a phenomenon of modern times. Beethoven marks the end of that great symphonic period which begins with Haydn, and though seventy years before the production of Beethoven's greatest symphony, Joseph Haydn had been drilling the little Esterhazy orchestra and trying to secure satisfactory performances, yet to the end of Beethoven's time the most important orchestras were usually filled up with amateurs for those special occasions on which a symphony was to be performed. It seems certain that the notion of a rendering actually corresponding to a symphonic composer's ideal intentions never dawned on musicians as a practical possibility till long after the greatest of symphonic composers was dead and buried.

Beethoven, no less than Sebastian Bach, often wrote for the future—not even for the next generation, but for the distant future. And Mendelssohn, who re-discovered Sebastian Bach and did so much to stir up the lethargy of his musical contemporaries and re-awaken interest in

the great works of the past—did not Mendelssohn announce, as a general principle for the guidance of conductors, that they should beware of slow *tempi*, and take everything at a good pace, so that the faults of phrasing might not be too obvious?

The very terms in which the recommendation was couched show that Mendelssohn was not unconscious of the faults that marred the best orchestral playing of his time; but being of a mild, easy-going disposition, he was not the man to expect impossibilities—such is the ordinary musician's term for any exertion a little out of his ordinary routine. It was reserved for a more masterful mind to expect impossibilities, and to obtain them.

When the works of Wagner began to attract attention, consternation fell on all the old-fashioned conductors of Germany, the "Pig-tails" as Wagner never wearied of calling them. Life was not worth living, they felt, if they had to deal with such scores, and then lamentations were reinforced by the bandsmen, who found that countless passages written by Wagner were impossible of performance.

But it so happened, as if by a special Providence, that along with Wagner certain performing musicians, who were not so easily frightened, had been ripening towards their life's task. From Liszt and Von Bülow presently came demonstrations of the fact that Wagner's music was not so impossible as at first thought to be, though requiring a method of interpretation different from that of the "Pig-tails." In 1869 appeared Wagner's pamphlet "On Conducting," just three years after his first meeting with Hans Richter,

and, whatever may be thought of the style of that pamphlet, it is beyond question that it marks the beginning of a new era in the history of orchestral music. Besides Richter, all modern conductors of world-wide reputation—Bülow, Levi, Seidl, Weingartner and Richard Strauss—were found in the same school. They learned from Wagner how to play Beethoven, and their method has revolutionised the musical world.

Now that Bülow is gone, the acknowledged leader and master of them all is Hans Richter, the incarnate genius of musical interpretation.

To Richter's influence and example, far more than to anything else that could be named, is due that prodigious improvement in the standard of orchestral performance all over the world, which is the most notable feature in the history of music during the past thirty years. Principally owing to Richter's matchless combination of artistic enthusiasm, practical mastery, and genial good sense, we now hear things that musical prophets and wise men, such as Beethoven desired to hear and had not heard.

Hans Richter belongs to a German family of musicians. He was born at Raab, in Hungary, in 1843, and, after a good musical grounding, entered the Conservatorium at Vienna in 1859. He chose the horn as his principal instrument, but his gift for playing musical instruments was so prodigiously strong that in the course of a few years he acquired the technical control of all the more important instruments in the orchestra, besides pianoforte and organ.

One of the earliest appointments that he held was that of principal horn-player at the Imperial

Opera in Vienna. After quitting the Conservatorium he continued his studies under Sechter, the celebrated contrapuntist, and thus when the great opportunity of his life came he approached his task with magnificent and perhaps unparalleled resources, in respect of practical and theoretical knowledge. The opportunity came in 1866—Wagner, then living in Switzerland, wanted a competent musician to help him in preparing the score of “Meistersinger” for the press.

To Vienna, then, as now, the metropolis of the musical world, he forwarded the request that such a musician should be found and despatched to him at Tribschen, near Lucerne. The choice fell on Richter, and thus the two great men, the exact complements of each other as regards their artistic power became acquainted. Richter took up his residence in Wagner’s house; the great composer, who possessed a Napoleonic eye for talent, at once appreciated the immense powers of his youthful colleague, and an alliance sprang up between the two men which only terminated at Wagner’s death.

Trial performances with orchestras brought together from the musicians of Zürich and Lucerne quickly convinced the Wagnerian circle of Richter’s genius for selecting, training and conducting an orchestra, while the preparation of the “Meistersinger” score was carried out to the composer’s complete satisfaction. Those who examined the fair copy of Richter’s handwriting which was on view at the Musical and Theatrical Exhibition of 1892 in Vienna can testify to the marvellous neatness as well as to the technical correctness and good style of Richter’s manu-



script. It should be remembered, too, that the score of "Meistersinger" was at that time by far the most intricate in existence, and is even now only surpassed in elaborate complexity by "Tristan."

But not only with the preparation of the score was Richter concerned. Long before Wagner had put the final touches to "Meistersinger," Richter had taken the solo and choral parts to Munich, and had there personally trained the singers who were to take part in the first production. The style was so new and so perplexing to the musicians of the day that Richter encountered apparently insuperable obstacles at every turn. Nevertheless, everything was carried through to a brilliantly successful issue, and the first performance of "Meistersinger," which took place at Munich in June, 1868, was really the first great triumph of the Wagnerian cause. Though Bülow was at the conductor's desk, it is unquestionable that the labour of Hercules, which was necessary to bring the work to a first hearing, was performed in the main by Richter.

At the sixth performance the representative of Kothner fell ill, and, at the last moment, Richter stepped into the breach, donned the costume of Kothner, and sang and acted the part with great success. No wonder a distinguished critic should have said that Wagner's "Meistersinger" has become part of Richter's flesh and blood.

He prepared the score; he trained all the singers and players for the first performance; he has conducted countless brilliant representations of the entire work, and on one occasion, at any rate, he enacted one of the characters. The qualities

exhibited by Richter in connection with the production of "Meistersinger" caused him to be appointed fellow-director with Bülow at the Royal Opera in Munich, and when Bülow resigned in the following year Richter stood alone in that post.

The impatience of the King of Bavaria to have Wagner's immense "Nibelung" trilogy performed was the cause of a premature attempt to present "Rheingold" before the extraordinary *mise-en-scène* required by that work was ready. Rather than take part in an unworthy rendering, Richter tendered his resignation and quitted the brilliant post to which he had been so recently appointed. Thus early did Richter show the stuff of which he was made. He had absolutely nothing else in view. He simply had to look about for employment, and we next find him in Paris, working in combination with Padeloup, who was engaged in a scheme for bringing out "Rienzi" at the Théâtre Lyrique. The scheme came to nothing, but the authorities of the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, who had heard of Richter's fame, invited him to come and superintend the first production of "Lohengrin" in French which they were preparing.

With "Lohengrin" in Brussels he was no less successful than with "Meistersinger" in Munich. Though at first everyone found the music "impossible," on March 21st, 1870 a magnificent performance was achieved. As an example of the difficulties with which Richter had to contend in preparing for that performance, it may be mentioned that he found the choral singers at the theatre incapable of rendering their parts, and had to teach them, note by note, like children.

Yet in the public performance there was no trace of these miseries, everything went with freedom and spontaneity, and ever since the first production under Richter "Lohengrin" has been a great feature of the Brussels repertory.

After fulfilling his engagement in Brussels, Richter returned to Tribschen, near Lucerne, where he found Wagner just finishing that colossal work, the "Ring of the Nibelung." It seems almost incredible that in addition to their gigantic labours in bringing what was almost a new art into existence, these remarkable men should have found means at this period of devoting much time to the study of Beethoven's string quartets. Richter took part regularly in the quartet playing, and he considers these hours during which he was initiated by Wagner into the deepest mysteries of Beethoven's art among the most valuable of his experiences. In the same year, 1870, Wagner finished his "Siegfried Idyll," a lovely *aubade* that was written in honour of his infant son's birthday. Richter had been entrusted with the task of getting together a small orchestra in Lucerne, and of rehearsing the new work with them. On the appointed day the musicians assembled on the steps of the villa at Tribschen and performed the piece under Richter's direction to the delight of the Wagner household, among whom the "Siegfried Idyll" is generally known as the "Treppenmusik" (from "Treppe," a stair or flight of steps).

The following year Richter accepted an invitation to Buda-Pesth, and there he remained until, in 1875, he was appointed conductor at the Imperial Opera in Vienna, a post that he still

(in 1897) holds. Thus the Austrian Capital became for the second time his home and the centre of his activity, and, indeed, those who know him well, know that in spite of all cosmopolitan experiences, Richter is "ein echter Wiener"—a true child of Vienna.

The next "labour of Hercules" was the bringing out of Wagner's trilogy, the "Ring of the Nibelungs" with which the Bayreuth theatre was inaugurated in 1876. During the rehearsals Wagner sat on the stage directing the actors and Richter stood at the conductor's desk.

Now that the work has become familiar we have lost all standard for estimating the task which Richter undertook and once more carried through to a brilliantly successful conclusion.

That vast scene which occupies four evenings in performance he seemed to have at his fingers' ends. Such was the impression made by Richter upon all who were concerned, either actively, or merely as spectators and listeners, in the inaugural Festival of 1876 at Bayreuth that they recognised him as a new phenomenon in the world of art.

The period of modern orchestral conducting may be said to date from that occasion. It was then brought home to everyone that conducting was a great art worthy of independent cultivation. The public began to take an interest in the style of different conductors, and to show some sensitiveness as regards interpretations of the great masters. The era of the "Pig-tails" had come to an end.

In 1877 Richter came with Wagner to London, and ever since that year the "Richter Concerts" have been a regular institution in this country.



In Vienna, the city of his adoption, he is conductor, not only at the opera, but also of the Philharmonic Concerts, and latterly of the music in the Imperial Chapel.

Of late years Richter has conceived a certain dislike to the theatre, where he finds his work beset with small worries. He is coming to regard the concert-hall more and more as his special sphere of activity. Upon Richter's art as a conductor a good-sized book might be written. Here I can attempt no more than to enumerate a few of his qualities:—Practical knowledge of the technique belonging to all the more important instruments; mastery of musical theory in all its branches; an unerring rhythmical sense; judgment and insight with regard to every possible musical style, enabling him always to find the right *tempo* for any movement or section of a movement (the most important and most difficult thing for a conductor); mastery of the principles discovered by Wagner respecting orchestral dynamics, such as the necessity of equably sustained tone without crescendo or diminuendo, as a basis to start upon the conditions determining proper balance of strings and wind, the nature of a round-toned *piano* delivery (to be studied from first-rate singers), the manner of producing long crescendos and diminuendos, also of producing a true *piano* and a true *forte* (Wagner having pointed out that old-fashioned orchestras never played anything but mezzo-forte); mastery of Wagner's system of phrasing, his far-reaching investigations with regard to *cantabile* passages, his treatment of *fermate*, his distinction between the naïf *allegro* and the poetic *allegro*; mastery and practical



realisation of all Wagner's other ideas concerning musical interpretation or public performances, a subject in which Wagner took a far more deep, expert and fruitful interest than any other of the great composers.

Finally, Richter is distinguished from most other conductors by his personal behaviour at the conductor's desk. He is free from antics; every movement has significance and every attitude has dignity.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## NIETZSCHE.

Nietzsche and  
Wagner

*June 18,  
1896.*

The intellectual world of the later nineteenth century has no more remarkable and original, and also no more tragic, figure to show than the author of these essays. He was descended from

a noble Polish family originally named Nietzky, who gave up their title and estates and settled in Germany on account of Protestant convictions. Friedrich Nietzsche was born in 1844. He received a classical education, and at twenty-eight years of age became Professor of Classical Philology in the University of Bâle; but throughout life his love of art, and especially of music, remained an absorbing passion. It appears that his musical instinct was first aroused by the works of Schumann, and that youthful enthusiasm led to serious musical studies. Later on he became the most ardent of Wagnerians, and finally the fiercest of Wagner's assailants. Nietzsche's earliest writings are academic monographs on various classical subjects, the brilliant scholarship of which led to his appointment at Bâle. The philosophical essays began to appear towards his thirtieth year, during

his professorship at Bâle. There are verses, too, by Nietzsche which exhibit a genuine poetic faculty. The manner and order of Nietzsche's mental awakening is worthy of attention—first, the love of music, leading to a general interest in art; next, philological studies, originally undertaken, in the opinion of his sister Madame Förster-Nietzsche, as a relief from the feverish problems of modern æsthetics, and pursued to such purpose that he became a master of Roman and Greek learning. His writings also reveal a wide knowledge of Hebrew and Indian literature, besides thorough familiarity with all that is of first-rate importance in modern thought. His first intellectual master seems to have been Schopenhauer. In the year 1889 Nietzsche became hopelessly insane. There is not the least trace of mental disorder in the previous family history. The stocks from which he was descended were on both sides of exceptional energy, ability, and character. There is also abundant testimony to the simplicity, amiability, and charm of his personal character. His friends and colleagues at Bâle seem to have had no suspicion of the explosive energies which appear in his writings. His tastes were throughout life reserved and fastidious, and the ultimate breakdown of his mind can only be attributed to the sheer excess of feverish energy with which he lived the intellectual life and to the effects of spiritual isolation upon a sensitive and most arrogant nature. He now lies to all intents and purposes dead at Naumburg-on-the-Saale, in Saxony, which for the past fifty years has been the home of the family.

The present volume contains Nietzsche's latest

essays, the publications of 1888. The sub-title given to the "Twilight of the Idols," namely, "How to Philosophise with a Hammer," applies equally well to the entire volume, which deals exclusively in destructive criticism. The "idols" upon which Nietzsche here exercises the hammer of a singularly comprehensive iconoclasm are those of modern democratic civilisation. The editor of the series is Dr. Tille, Lecturer on German Language and Literature in the University of Glasgow, and author of "Von Darwin bis Nietzsche," a book that has attracted some attention in Germany. No explanation is offered of the motives which prompted the choice of Nietzsche's latest works for the first volume of the English edition. The history of Nietzsche's life since 1876 is the history of a tragic struggle. In that year he attended the Bayreuth festival, though in a weak state of health. The impression was overpowering, and henceforth the Wagnerian drama appeared to him in a new light. He conceived a horror of Wagner, but so deeply rooted in his affections was the Wagnerian art that with his belief in Wagner everything else that he had cared for was cast to the winds; he turned upon the religion of his childhood, the philosophy of his youth, the very land of his birth, and the only language that he really knew. Why, it may be asked, is the "Wagner Case," where the Bayreuth master figures as a "rattlesnake," offered to readers who have had no means of access to the earlier essay by the same writer called "Wagner in Bayreuth," an utterance of enthusiastic discipleship and probably the most discerning appreciation of Wagner ever yet published?

Again, in the early essay on "Schopenhauer as Educator," one of the "Inopportune Contemplations," Nietzsche reckons himself among those readers of Schopenhauer who know almost from the outset that they have encountered a determining influence; and, indeed, so saturated is Nietzsche with Schopenhauer's ideas that he cannot get rid of the Schopenhauer terminology even in his later writings, where Schopenhauer has become an "old false-coiner." The expression "Wille zur Macht," an obvious modification of Schopenhauer's "Wille zum Leben," continually recurs even in Nietzsche's latest writings, and was to have formed the title of an entire book in his projected work "The Transvaluation of all Values." The same early work contains a passage in which Christianity is called one of the purest examples of the striving after perfection to be found in the history of mankind, while the "Antichrist," the last essay in the volume now before us, is a new and more formidable version of the Voltairian "Ecrasez l'Infâme," a furious denunciation not merely of Christian dogma, but also, and more especially, of the ethical principles that are the essence of the Christian system for the modern world. All these recantations thus appear with scarcely a hint of the antecedent confessions of faith. It has been denied that the mental development of Nietzsche underwent any revolution or breach of continuity in the year 1876. German disciples have attempted to prove the consistency of that development, and in the April number of the "Savoy" Magazine Mr. Havelock Ellis remarks, with reference to Nietzsche's Polish descent, that he was "not Teuton enough to abide



for ever with Wagner." But in any case the apostasy of Nietzsche from Wagner is a painful subject. When he satirises Germany as the "flat-land" of Europe, the land of the Hyperboreans and worshippers of Woden, the god of bad weather, when he accuses the Germans of loving everything nebulous and ambiguous and hating clearness, consistency, and logic, we may remember that though Germany was the land of his birth Nietzsche was not a German by blood. But to Wagner he had been bound by ties of personal friendship as well as by fervent artistic admiration, so that no sufficient excuse can be offered for the appalling diatribe in which he smothers with ridicule both Wagner himself and everything connected with the Wagnerian art. The plea of insanity can scarcely be allowed. There is too much method in Nietzsche's madness. Moreover, he is no vulgarian like Nordau, lecturing in a muddy pathological jargon about subjects completely over his head. Nietzsche knew what he was talking about; if he had not first been the most enthusiastic of Wagner's disciples he could not have become so formidable an enemy. But though we may wish that on arriving at a new mental standpoint he had dealt more gently with his former friends, yet the temper which leads a writer to disregard every other consideration in sheer intentness on the truth of the matter in hand is a quality not to be slightly discounted.

That Nordau should have anticipated Nietzsche in this country is a public calamity. The talk about Wagner's degeneracy and decadence had thus passed into a tiresome cant, and now that the

real source of the only serious anti-Wagnerian criticism makes its appearance the task of disengaging the important side of that criticism seems almost hopeless. A few of the leading points against Wagner's works may, however, be mentioned here—the want of life in the whole and the excess of life in the small parts, the internal anarchy, the distress and torpor alternating with disturbance and chaos, the dwelling on the pathetic note till taste is overcome and resistance overthrown, the hypnotic character of Wagner's influence, his musty hierarchic perfumes, his wealth of colours and demi-tints, his mysteries of vanishing light that spoil us for other music—these are some of the characteristics of decadent art upon which the case against Wagner is based, and it is impossible to deny either the acuteness of Nietzsche's observation or the damaging character of his indictment. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the renovation of musical drama under Wagner's influence is an unquestionable fact. Wagner saved us from the period when operas were concocted from point to point by the most distinguished composer of the day with a view to the tastes of the Parisian Jockey Club. Wagner brought back dignity and poetry; he brought back sincerity, he infused a strain of powerful and far-reaching vitality into the art that he practised. The enthusiasm of the Wagnerian renaissance absorbed nearly all that was commanding in the musical talent of the time; it affected even the Italian school, which had hitherto pursued an absolutely independent line of development. Admitting, therefore, that Nietzsche is often right in detail, just as Voltaire

is now and then right when he finds fault with "Hamlet," we are disposed to reject Nietzsche's general conclusion no less emphatically than Voltaire's description of Shakspeare as a drunken savage. The truth is that decadence or decline in one principle of vitality often means awakening energy in another. Nietzsche had latterly worked himself to a point of view from which the mystery of northern poetry and the vividly imaginative detail of Gothic art are intolerable. His remarks about Wagner's want of taste in the disposition of broad masses and his over-liveliness in minute detail are like a criticism of Strasburg Cathedral by an ancient architect; his view of the Wagnerian drama as concerned with problems of hysteria and as exhibiting a gallery of morbid personages is like an indictment by a Roman patrician of the entire "Corpus Poeticum Boreale." Nietzsche was all his life a stranger to tolerance and compromise, and towards the end this peculiarity became greatly accentuated. His failing health attracted him to southern climates, and he presently decreed that the north was no longer to exist. Having found a sort of salvation among the "Halcyonians," he is constrained to wage spiritual warfare against all Hyperboreans, and especially against Wagner, regarded as the typical Hyperborean. "Ah, the old Minotaur!" says Nietzsche, "What has he not cost us already! Every year trains of the finest youths and maidens are led into his labyrinth to be devoured. Every year all Europe strikes up the cry: 'Off to Crete! Off to Crete!'" It is highly interesting to observe where Nietzsche finds an antidote for the painful impression of the Wagnerian art. The one modern

work that thoroughly satisfied his later taste was Bizet's "Carmen." "This music seems to me perfect," he says; "it approaches lightly, nimbly, and with courtesy. It is rich and precise. It builds, organises, completes, and is thus the antithesis of that polypus in music which Wagner calls unending melody. It has the subtlety of a race, not of an individual. It is free from grimace and imposture. I become a better man," says Nietzsche, "when this Bizet exhorts me. Such music sets the spirit free. It gives wings to thought. With Bizet's work one takes leave of the humid north and all the steam of the Wagnerian ideal." "Carmen" is only the music of devil-may-care, of gaiety and sunburnt mirth, with a strong spice of southern passion; but it has really vivid originality, it has true unity of style, and the unerring perfection with which the composer has caught and reflected a certain mood of wayward grace and mastered the musical symbolism of the bright and fierce and fickle south, the lightness and fire, the logical development and rhythmical charm of the music stamp the work as an unmistakable masterpiece of its kind. In his delight at finding something congenial to his later taste Nietzsche forgot the question of scope, and forgot that Bizet was only a trifler. It was enough for him that he had found a "Halcyonian" to contrast with Wagner, the "Hyperborean." Another objection to the line taken in the introduction is that the isolated insistence on Nietzsche's "physiological" standard gives the impression of a type of thinker inconceivably remote from what he really was. Many a dull and stodgy materialist, such as the author

of "Kraft und Stoff," has maintained the universality of the physiological standard; while the special characteristic of Nietzsche's ethical ideas is surely something very different. Is it not the audacious denial that any one ethical system is valid for all classes of mankind?—the theory of "Herrenmoral" and "Sklavenmoral," master-morality and slave-morality—and the attribution of all social mischief to the ever-increasing prevalence of slave-morality over master-morality. Is it not the acceptance of the caste-system as the simple recognition of a universal and unchanging fact of life which really differentiates Nietzsche both from the English moralists and from all other European writers whatsoever? Perhaps Dr. Tille was unwilling to alarm his readers, and conscious of addressing a public which regards the question of human equality as having been finally settled a hundred years ago, deliberately avoided bringing forward opinions that savour of Oriental despotism. But seeing that every line of Nietzsche's writings is animated by such opinions, it is impossible to deal with the subject at all without shocking the ideas of a democratic age. Nietzsche, it should be remembered, was a belated scion of the proudest, most turbulent, and most ruthlessly tyrannical aristocracy that ever existed. He witnessed, with despairing rage, both the success of vulgarity in that modern Europe which had ruined his ancient and noble race, and what he regarded as the progressive depreciation of the high-bred qualities in human nature under the influence of socialistic ideas. Though nowhere expressly stated, the thought of his people, disinherited for their inability to



adapt themselves to the modern spirit, is never absent from his consciousness, and he uses his matchless literary power to tell the men of an industrial and co-operative civilisation what the last of genuine aristocrats thinks of them. With advancing years Nietzsche became less and less German and more and more Polish, till after the break with Wagner and Schopenhauer we find him openly satirising everything German. He has, in fact, "reverted to type," and from 1876 onwards he figures as a feudal aristocrat in exile.

In his general type of culture Nietzsche was very un-English. The questions of æsthetics have never been treated in this country as anything but an affair of dilettantes—at best a superior kind of trifling; whereas for Nietzsche they were a matter of life and death. And if it is a point of conscience with cultivated Englishmen to take some interest in graphic and plastic art, we have nevertheless practically excluded music from our scheme of culture. We have, perhaps, advanced a little beyond Lord Chesterfield's view of music as a pursuit leading to nothing but waste of time and bad company, and an English nobleman of the present day would probably hesitate to lay down, as Lord Chesterfield laid down, that the legitimate claims of music upon the attention of a cultivated man are adequately met by the occasional giving of a penny to a fiddler. Yet in the depths of his consciousness the typical Englishman has still a tendency to regard the disputes of the musical world as Byron regarded the Handel and Buononcini controversy:—

"Strange all this difference should be  
"Twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee."

Excepting, perhaps, one or two recent cases, such as Dr. Parry and Mr. Hadow, our men of light and leading have had nothing important to say about music, whereas for Nietzsche, a scholar and critic of commanding reputation, music was the one art possessing genuine vitality in the modern world, and the questions of musical æsthetics were anything but an affair of dilettantes; they were the questions connected with a tremendous power for good or evil.

Of all Nietzsche's fantastic conceptions that which has produced the most curious results is the famous "blonde beast," a sort of bogey invented for the purpose of annoying and frightening Socialists. The satirist begins by expressing contempt of herding creatures and admiration of "beautiful solitary beasts of prey." Sheep and cattle, he reminds the Socialists, are naturally gregarious, but lions have never been known to acquire the gregarious instinct. Next he develops the theory of analogy between great men of the conquering type and common criminals—the same theory as is set forth, ostensibly as a joke but really with much seriousness, in Fielding's "Jonathan Wild." This theory stands in high repute among Socialists, who find it useful for attacking great men of the conquering and warfaring type, so that when Nietzsche turns it against Socialism he strikes with a two-edged sword. Lastly, he conjures up a fearsome image of predatory and unscrupulous vigour, a combination of Napoleon and feudal aristocrat. This is the "blonde beast" which, according to the programme of the Nietzschean apocalypse, is to devour the enfeebled man of the modern world.

It is one of Nietzsche's happiest inspirations, and has already provoked a literature. Quite recently, for example, a book appeared in Germany accepting with perfect gravity and recommending for immediate practical adoption the principles of the "blonde beast." One might almost imagine that Nietzsche foresaw some such result with secret satisfaction at the idea of his posthumous revenge on the "flat-land." There are signs, too, in the English press that the popular imagination is about to fix on Nietzsche as a writer who recommends promiscuous ruffianism. Was not Darwin known for many years as the preposterous eccentric who said men were descended from monkeys? It is, however, advisable to warn those who are not greatly concerned with mental problems, who value tradition and take a hopeful view of life, that they had better leave Nietzsche alone. His influence is on the whole gloomy, disquieting, and profoundly unsettling, though in relation to the critical literature of the Continent he is unquestionably one of the great originals, one of the few "voices" that find many echoes.

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**Nietzsche in  
English**

*August 4,  
1899.*

The publication of a complete English translation of the works of Nietzsche is an enterprise which deserves the cordial thankfulness of all lovers of profound thought and fine literary style.

It is not too much to say that no German writer since Goethe's death, with the possible exception of Schopenhauer, has united in the same degree as Nietzsche the two characteristics of originality

of matter and charm and pungency of expression. And of no modern writer whatever, except of George Meredith, can it be said that he possesses anything like Nietzsche's power of compelling his reader, whether he is an admiring reader or a protesting one, to think for himself about the fundamental problems of life and conduct. Nietzsche's philosophy, with its intense hatred of Christianity and modern humanitarianism, is scarcely likely to make any large number of converts among us, but if it can compel us to ask ourselves honestly and plainly what the unacknowledged ideals of our civilisation are, and whether they are, after all, capable of being rationally justified, he will have done an infinitely greater service to thought than any founder of sect or school.

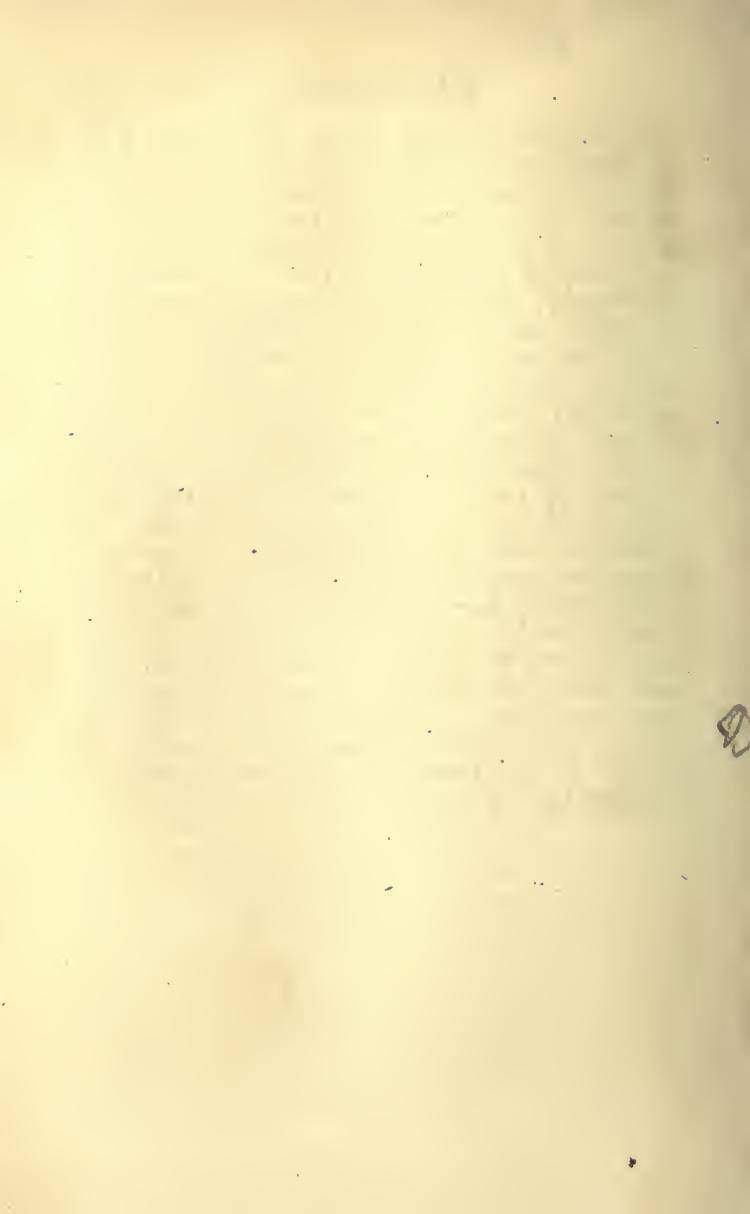
If one measures the worth of a book by its suggestiveness rather than by the degree in which its propositions can be accepted as a whole, Nietzsche's own description of his "Thus spake Zarathustra" as the profoundest of German works will hardly appear exaggerated. In the absence of the great work on the "Transvaluation of all Values," which was so lamentably cut short by the philosopher's incurable illness, "Zarathustra" must probably be accepted as the prime document of the new moral code, of which Nietzsche was the best known and most eloquent preacher.

Nietzsche's hero has, of course, very little in common with the semi-historical fighting prophet of Iran. Under the disguise of a story with no particular scene or date, he gives you a treatise on the moral life as it might be if men would regard the extirpation of the unfit and the propagation

of a race of physically and mentally superior beings as the first and last of human duties. Of course, in any such picture there must always be many subjective features, and much that is characteristic of Zarathustra, his extreme individualism, his love of loneliness and solitary places, his hatred of a complex and expensive life, is simply a reflection of the peculiar personal taste of his Creator. Had Nietzsche himself not been free from ordinary social and domestic ties, it is likely that the individualistic and anti-social strain in his teachings would have been far less prominent than it is. But when all allowance has been made for such personal idiosyncracies, it remains the fact that Nietzsche has more boldly than any other writer of our time raised the most important of social questions, the question whether the ethical and political ideals of Christianity, of democracy, of universal benevolence, are those of a healthy or those of a radically diseased humanity. No future vindication of our current idea can be regarded as of any value unless it sets itself to grapple, more seriously than professional moral philosophy has as yet done, with the attack of Zarathustra. In the minor writings which fill the other two volumes of the translation already published, Nietzsche is less constructive and more purely iconoclastic. The "Antichrist" subjects the established religion of Europe and the moral code based upon it to a criticism which is always suggestive, often profound, sometimes merely angry and wrong-headed. The attack upon Wagner, in whom Nietzsche had once looked for a master, is closely connected with the furious onslaught upon Christian ideals. Of Wagner the



musician Nietzsche has many things both hard and shrewd to say, but the Wagner against whom the main brunt of his polemic is directed is Wagner the psychologist, the pessimist, the preacher of chastity and resignation—in a word, as Nietzsche understands him, the decadent. Christianity, according to Nietzsche, has made decadence into a religion, Schopenhauer has turned it into a philosophy, Wagner into an æsthetic theory. Hence the constant polemic against all three which recurs in all Nietzsche's writings. The "Genealogy of Morals" is devoted to the exposition of a favourite theory of Nietzsche's, that there have always been two antithetical codes of moral values, that of "masters" and that of "slaves." "Masters" prize above everything else qualities which bespeak a superabundance of personal force, strength, beauty, wealth, long life; "slaves" set the highest store by qualities which make servitude more endurable, and in the end render revenge upon the "master" possible. Starting from this primary assumption, Nietzsche shows wonderful insight in his examination of the growth of concepts like "guilt," "sin," "bad conscience."





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